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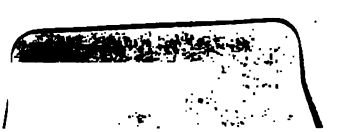

A. Nettleton

MEMOIR

OF THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

REV. ASAHEL NETTLETON, D. D.

BY BENNET TYLER, D. D.,

President and Professor of Christian Theology in the Theological Institute of Connecticut.

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A. Nettleton.

PREFACE.

It has been well said, that "mere human greatness is an unenviable distinction. But the man, with whose greatness is combined moral excellence to direct and adorn it, is allied to Jesus Christ. God has from time to time, given to his church, men, not only of extraordinary intellectual powers, but with minds so pre-eminently sanctified, as to render them suitable agents for the accomplishment of his purposes on earth." That some account of the lives of such men should be preserved, and handed down to posterity, few will deny. This should be done, not for the purpose of glorifying men, who, however useful they may have been, are only instruments by which God accomplishes his purposes; but to magnify the grace of God, and to promote the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. The influence of example in forming the human character, is confessedly great. Hence the utility of contemplating the examples of the wise and good. "If" as one observes, "religion appears lovely when portrayed merely in the simplicity and amiableness of her principles, how much more lovely when exhibited in the purity and benevolence of her conduct. When we see something more than right views and dispositions; when we behold not the portrait, but the living features of her excellence, her image sinks deep into the soul."

Much of the instruction of the sacred scriptures, is communicated under the form of example. Besides the perfect pattern set by Christ for our imitation, we are pointed to the example of the ancient saints, "who through faith and patience inherited the promises." We are reminded of the trials through which they were called to pass—of the temptations by which they were assailed—of the persecutions which they endured. We see them making their way

to heaven "through much tribulation," and at length coming off "conquerors and more than conquerors through him that had loved them." That the contemplation of these examples is suited to stimulate and encourage believers in the christian race, there can be no doubt. Why, then, should not the biography of good men of a later period have a similar effect? Who can doubt, that the perusal of the memoirs of Doddridge, of Edwards, of Brainerd, of Martyn, of Hallock, of Payson, and of others, has been the means of quickening, and encouraging thousands of the people of God, and of promoting the work of sanctification in their hearts?

Among those who were at all acquainted with the subject of this memoir, or who have heard of the extensive good of which he was made the instrument, there will be but one opinion as to the importance of preserving some memorial of his life and character. He was no ordinary man: nor was he raised up for an ordinary purpose. Very few men have ever lived, who have been the honored instruments of turning so many souls "from darkness to light and from the power of satan unto God." Thousands have acknowledged him as their spiritual father, who it is believed, will be his joy and crown in the day of the Lord. Of these, many were called before him to their heavenly rest, and have doubtless welcomed him to their blissful society. A great number still remain, to pray and labor for Zion. Of his spiritual children, many are ministers of the gospel; each one of whom is ready to exclaim in the language of Elisha, when witnessing the ascension of Elijah, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." And many ministers who were not his spiritual children, received an impulse from his preaching and example, either before or after they entered the ministry, which had a most salutary influence upon their character. The following statement of one who occupies a post of great responsibility in the church, I have no doubt, expresses the views and feelings of many others. "In my preparation for college, and in my first year in college, I had the happiness to hear him preach in two very powerful revivals; and I shall ever regard the influence which his preaching and his personal intercourse with me, exerted upon my character and views of ministerial duty, as of inestimable value."

The days in which he had health and strength to engage in arduous labor, were emphatically days of the right hand of the Most High. They will long be remembered on earth, and never be forgotten in heaven.

A letter written by the Rev. Dr. Beecher in 1827, contains the following testimony.

"Mr. Nettleton has served God and his generation with more self-denial, and constancy, and wisdom, and success, than any man living. I witnessed his commencement, and knew his progress, and the relative state of things in Connecticut, especially; and what (but for his influence in promoting revivals, and exciting and teaching by example others to promote them,) might have been the condition of the churches in those days of revolution through which they have passed. Considering the extent of his influence, I regard him as beyond comparison, the greatest benefactor which God has given to this nation; and through his influence in promoting pure and powerful revivals of religion, as destined to be one of the greatest benefactors of the world, and among the most efficient instruments of introducing the glory of the latter day." This was the testimony of one who had known the history of his labors for fifteen years, and who had witnessed their great and salutary influence.

"His holy zeal," says another minister, in a letter written soon after his death, "his tenderness and love, his prudence and judgment, and his admirable skill in presenting divine truth, and dealing with souls, made him at once, one of the most inspiring, and one of the safest examples to be presented before christians, and especially before ministers."

Another minister, in a letter to the writer, says, "I am gratified to learn, that you intend to publish as soon as practicable a biographical sketch of our much esteemed and beloved friend, the late Dr. Nettleton. This I regard as due to the memory of the deceased, to his numerous friends in different parts of the land, and to the cause of truth and vital godliness, which he advocated so ably and successfully, through the different periods of his ministry. It would be matter of unfeigned regret, if the wisdom, zeal, stability, spirit of kindness, and unconquerable perseverance in the work of the Lord which were such prominent characteristics of that man, should not be permitted to benefit others after he is silent in the grave.

"That he uniformly regarded himself as an accountable steward of God, and studied to show himself approved—that he was a devoted servant of the church, in laboring for its enlargement and growth in grace—that he wielded the sword of the spirit most dexterously for the conversion of men to God—that he was a vigilant and judicious guide and counsellor—that he strove to build up those who were spiritually begotten by him in the most holy faith—and

that he was a timely and efficient helper of his ministerial brethren, are facts too obvious to need proof, to those who have been conversant with him for the last twenty-five years."

Dr. Nettleton kept no journal of his religious exercises; nor until 1818 did he keep any journal of his labors. In the spring of that year, while laboring in Rocky Hill, he began to keep a memorandum, in which he noted down the times and places of preaching, and the texts from which he preached, together with occasional brief remarks. Many of the facts recorded in this memoir, were obtained from him in personal interviews, and committed to writing at the time. The reader may be assured, that nothing is stated as fact, of which the writer has not either personal knowledge, or the most satisfactory evidence.

Should the imperfect sketch which is here given of the life and character of this distinguished servant of God, be the means of inciting others to imitate his example, so far as he followed Christ, the labor of preparing it will be abundantly compensated.

East Windsor, Aug. 1st, 1844.

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

In presenting a new edition of this work to the public, the author feels constrained to say, that he is no less surprised than gratified, by the unexpected favor with which the first edition was received. He hopes the present edition will be thought not less worthy of public favor. It has been carefully revised and corrected. Some alterations have been made: and although the number of pages has not been increased, considerable additional matter has been inserted. The page has been somewhat enlarged, and the appearance of the book, it is believed, not a little improved.

The author would express his obligations to those friends who have favored him with their remarks on the first edition, (at whose suggestions some alterations have been made,) and especially to those who have furnished additional facts, with which to enrich the present edition.

That all who shall read these pages may possess, in a high degree, that religion which rendered the subject of this memoir so eminently useful while he lived, and which sustained him in the hour of death, is the prayer of the

BIOGRAPHER.

EAST WINDSOR, Jan. 1st, 1845.

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CHAPTER I.

His birth.—Childhood and Youth.—Conversion.

It is a striking fact, that a large proportion of those whom God has raised up to be distinguished instruments of promoting the interests of his church, have sprung from a humble origin. "The Reformer Zwingle, emerged from a shepherd's hut among the Alps; Melancthon, the great theologian of the Reformation, from an armorer's work shop; and Luther from the cottage of a poor miner." It has been so in every age. Moses, Samuel, David, and the Apostles of our Lord, were from the humble walks of life. And why should it not be so since our Lord himself, when he assumed our nature, was born in a low condition? God has in this way, poured contempt upon those earthly distinctions in which mankind are prone to glory.

Asahel Nettleton was born in North Killingworth, Connecticut, April 21, 1783, the same day on which the birth of Samuel J. Mills occurred. He was the eldest son, and second child, of a family of six children, consisting of three sons, and three daughters. His parents, though but little known to the world, were esteemed and respected by their neighbors. His father was a farmer, in moderate, but comfortable circumstances; and in this employment Asahel was mostly engaged, until he entered college, in 1805.

His childhood and youth, so far as is known to the writer,

were characterized by nothing very peculiar. His early advantages of education were such only, as are furnished by the common district school. That he made a good use of these advantages, we may infer from the thirst for knowledge which he evinced at a later period, and from the fact, that while a young man, he was employed several winters in the capacity of a school-teacher.

His parents, according to the custom which prevailed at that period in some parts of New England, were professors of religion, on what was called the half way covenant plan ;— that is, they were not admitted to full communion, but having publicly assented to the covenant of the church, they were permitted to offer their children in baptism.* Asahel was of course baptized in his infancy, and while a child, received some religious instruction from his parents. He was, in particular, required to commit to memory the Assembly's Catechism, which, as he has often remarked, was of great use to him when his attention was awakened to the concerns of his soul. His morals were also strictly guarded by his parents, and they had the satisfaction to know, that during the period of youth, he was not addicted to any vicious habits, but sustained, in the eyes of the world, an unblemished moral character.

While a child, he was occasionally the subject of religious impressions. At one time in particular, while alone in the field, and looking at the setting sun, he was powerfully impressed with the thought that he and all men must die. He was so affected by this thought, that he stood for some time

* This custom, according to Dr. Bellamy, was first introduced by the recommendation of a synod which met in Boston, 1662. Many ministers and churches zealously opposed it at the time, and although it gained extensive prevalence, it was never universally adopted. It began to be discontinued in the days of Edwards and Bellamy; for the latter remarks, "Of late a considerable number of churches which had adopted the practice, have laid it aside." The revivals, at the beginning of the present century, put a period to it in most of the churches and at present, it is scarcely known in any part of New England.

and wept aloud. But these feelings were transitory, and he seems to have had no permanent religious impressions, till the fall of 1800, when he was in the eighteenth year of his age. This was at the period so memorable in the history of our American Zion, as a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. For half a century the influences of the divine Spirit had been, in a great measure, withdrawn from the churches. Revivals, "like angel's visits, were few and far between." But during a period of four or five years, commencing with 1798, not less than one hundred and fifty churches in New England, were favored with the special effusions of the Holy Spirit; and thousands of souls, in the judgment of charity, were translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

In the blessings of this general out-pouring of the Spirit, North Killingworth shared. A narrative of the revival of religion in this town, was published in the fourth and fifth volumes of the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine.* A few individuals whose conversion was considered particularly interesting, were requested by their pastor to give him, in writing, an account of their religious exercises. Mr. Nettleton was one of the number; and his account, with that of two or three others, is incorporated in the printed narrative, and is as follows:

"Knowing by experience the deplorable state of a sinner, that he is by nature totally destitute of love and conformity to God, and that he cannot be saved but by a special act of sovereign grace, induceth me to ask for further instruction upon this all-important subject, and to communicate, in a summary manner, the state of my mind, and the feelings with which it has been exercised.

"From my earliest age, I endeavored to lead a moral life, being often taught that God would punish sinners; but I did

* In this narrative, the place is called the Second Society in Killingworth.

not believe that I should suffer for the few offences of which I had been guilty. Having avoided many sins which I saw in others, I imagined all was well with me, till I was about eighteen years old, when I heard a sermon preached upon the necessity of regeneration, which put me upon thinking of the need of a change of heart in myself. I did not, however, well receive the discourse at the time, for I was sensible I knew nothing about such a change, neither did I wish to know, for I believed myself as good as others without it, and to be equal with them, I thought would be sufficient. However, the thought troubled me considerably from day to day, and caused me to think of praying, which I had never done, except repeating some form as a little child, and doing it to remove the stings of a guilty conscience, when I considered myself in imminent danger. Sometime after this, I heard another sermon that convinced me I had quenched the spirit, which occasioned me the most alarming fears that I should forever be left to eat the fruit of my own ways. Supposing I was alone in the thoughts of eternity, I separated myself from all company, and determined to seek an interest in Christ. I concluded something must be done to appease God's anger. I read and prayed, and strove in every possible way to prepare myself to go to God, that I might be saved from his wrath. The more I strove in this selfish way, the more anxious I was, and no hope was given. Soon I began to murmur and repine, and accused God of the greatest injustice in requiring me to return to him; and while I was striving with all my might, as I supposed, he appeared not to regard me. I considered God obligated to love me, because I had done so much for him, and finding no relief, I wished that he might not be, and began really to doubt the truths of his holy word, and to disbelieve his existence; for if there was a God, I perfectly hated him. I searched the scriptures daily, hoping to find inconsistencies in them, to condemn the Bible because it was against me; and while I was diligently pursuing my purpose,

every thing I read, and every sermon I heard, condemned me. Christian conversation gave me the most painful sensations. I tried to repent, but I could not feel the least sorrow for my innumerable sins. By endeavoring to repent, I saw my heart still remained impenitent. Although I knew I hated every thing serious, yet I determined to habituate myself to the duties which God required, and see if I could not by that means be made to love him, and I continued in this state some months. The fear of having committed the unpardonable sin, now began to rise in my mind, and I could find no rest day nor night. When my weary limbs demanded sleep, the fear of awaking in a miserable eternity prevented the closing of my eyes, and nothing gave me ease. No voice of mirth, or sound whatever was heard, but what reminded me of the awful day when God shall bring every work into judgment. All self-righteousness failed me; and having no confidence in God, I was left in deep despondency. After a while, a surprising tremor seized all my limbs, and death appeared to have taken hold upon me. Eternity, the word eternity, sounded louder than any voice I ever heard, and every moment of time seemed more valuable than all the wealth of the world. Not long after this, an unusual calmness pervaded my soul, which I thought little of at first, except that I was freed from my awful convictions, and this sometimes grieved me, fearing I had lost all conviction. Soon after, hearing the feelings of a christian described, I took courage, and thought I knew by experience what they were. The character of God, and the doctrines of the Bible which I could not meditate upon before without hatred, especially those of election and free grace, now appear delightful, and the only means by which, through grace, dead sinners can be made the living sons of God. My heart feels its sinfulness. To confess my sins to God, gives me that peace which before I knew nothing of. To sorrow for it, affords that joy which my tongue cannot express. Were I sensible that at death, my hope would perish, yet it seem-

eth to me now, that I could not willingly quit the service of God, nor the company of christians; but my unfaithfulness often makes me fear my sincerity; and should I at last be raised to glory, all the praise will be to God for the exhibition of his sovereign grace."

This account was written not far from the time when he made a profession of religion; and interesting as it is, it contains but an imperfect sketch of the exercises of his mind, during the ten months in which the Spirit of God was striving with him. I add a few facts which are copied from a memorandum made immediately after hearing from his own lips, a more minute and particular account of his conversion.

In giving this account, he remarked that the foregoing printed statement, is not exactly as he wrote it. Some verbal alterations were made in it, which, although they were not intended to affect the sense, do affect it in some degree; particularly in the sentence in which these words occur: "When I heard a sermon preached upon the necessity of regeneration, which put me upon thinking of the need of a change of heart in myself." This, as it now reads, seems to convey the idea, that his attention was first awakened to the concerns of his soul, by a particular sermon. But this was not true, nor was such an idea expressed in the original manuscript. His first permanent religious impressions occurred in the following manner:

On the night of the annual Thanksgiving, in the fall of 1800, he attended a ball. The next morning, while alone, and thinking with pleasure on the scenes of the preceding night, and of the manner in which he had proposed to spend the day, in company with some of his young companions, the thought suddenly rushed upon his mind, we must all die, and go to the judgment, and with what feelings shall we then reflect upon these scenes! This thought was, for the moment, overwhelming; and it left an impression on his mind, which he could not efface. His pleasing reflections on the past, and antici-

pations of the future, vanished at once, and gave place to feelings of a very different kind. These feelings he concealed; but he could not entirely banish them from his mind. The world had lost its charms. All those amusements in which he had taken delight, were overcast with gloom. His thoughts dwelt much on the scenes of death, judgment and eternity. He knew that he had an immortal soul that must be happy or miserable in the future world; and although he had consoled himself with the thought that he was as good as others around him, and that his condition was, of course, as safe as theirs; yet he now felt conscious that he was unprepared to meet his God. He at the same time perceived that he was liable every moment to be cut down by the stroke of death, and summoned to his last account. He had no peace of mind by day or by night. Although, at this time, he had no very just conceptions of the divine law, or of the depravity of his heart; yet he was sensible that he was a sinner, and that his sins must be pardoned, or he could not be saved. The duty of prayer was now forcibly impressed upon his mind, a duty which he had almost entirely neglected; and it was not without a great struggle in his feelings, that he was brought to bend the knee to Jehovah. At the same time, he gave himself much to the reading of the Scriptures and other religious books, and separated himself as much as possible from thoughtless companions. So far as he knew, and so far as is now known, there was, at that time, no other person in the town under serious impressions.* The young people with whom he had been most intimate, were exceedingly thoughtless, and given to vain and sinful amusements. They were, at this time, making arrangements for the establishment of a dancing school, and they expected his aid and co-operation in the measure. But to their astonishment, he utterly refused to

* This was in the Autumn of 1800. The revival did not become visible till the following spring.

have anything to do with it. He had made up his mind to quit forever all such amusements, and to seek the salvation of his soul. But as he did not reveal his feelings to any of his associates, they knew not how to account for this sudden change in his appearance and conduct. Some, perhaps suspected the true cause; while others supposed that for some reason, unknown to them, his affections had become alienated from his former friends. Thus, for months, he mourned in secret, and did not communicate his feelings to a single individual. During this period, he had a strong desire that some of his young companions would set out with him in pursuit of religion: and although his proud heart would not permit him to make known to them the state of his mind, yet he occasionally ventured to expostulate with them on the folly and sinfulness of their conduct; and to some few individuals, he addressed short letters on the same subject. These warnings were treated by some, with ridicule and contempt. On the minds of others, they made an impression, which, as he afterwards learned, was never effaced. This was particularly the case with Philander Parmele, who was afterwards his classmate in college, and intimate friend through life.*

When Mr. Nettleton first became anxious respecting the salvation of his soul, he had not, as has been remarked, any very just conceptions of the depravity of his heart. He was sensible that he was not in a safe condition. He knew that he needed something which he did not possess, to prepare him for heaven. He had a general vague idea that he was a sinner, but he saw not the fountain of iniquity within him. As is common with persons when awakened to a sense of their danger, he went about to establish his own righteousness. He vainly presumed, that by diligent and persevering efforts, he should recommend himself to the favor of God. He was

* Mr. Parmele became pastor of the church in Bolton, Conn. At his house Mr. Nettleton was sick with the typhus fever in 1822. Mr. Parmele took the fever of him and died.

accordingly very abundant in his religious services. He not only abandoned those amusements in which he had delighted, and forsook in a great measure the society of those who took no interest in the subject of religion; but he spent much time in retirement, earnestly crying to God for mercy. He would often repair to the fields and forests for this purpose, and he sometimes spent a large part of the night in prayer. In this way, he expected to obtain the forgiveness of his sins, and the peace and consolation which God has promised to his people. But after laboring for some time in this manner, he became alarmed at his want of success. God seemed to pay no regard to his prayers: and how to account for this fact he knew not. At this crisis, he was assailed by infidel doubts. The question arose in his mind, whether he had not proved the Bible to be false. It is written, *Ask and ye shall receive, Seek and ye shall find.* He said to himself, I have asked, but I have not received — I have sought but I have not found How then can these promises be true? And how can the book which contains them, be the word of God? He found himself disposed to cherish these doubts, and to seek for further proof that the Bible is not true. He searched the Scriptures on purpose to find contradictions in them, and he even went so far as to begin to doubt the existence of a God. Like the fool, he said in his heart there is no God; that is, he wished there were none; for he was sensible that if there was a God, he was not reconciled to his character; and he wished the Bible to be false, because he saw that it condemned him. But his efforts to satisfy himself that religion is not a reality, did not succeed. The thought would sometimes arise, what if the Bible should prove to be true? Then I am lost forever. This would fill him with inconceivable horror. These struggles in his mind, led him to a more just knowledge of his character and condition. He began to see the plague of his own heart. His doubts respecting the truth of he promises which God has made to those who ask, and

seek, were dispelled by the painful conviction that he never had asked and sought as God requires. The commandment came, sin revived, and he died. He saw that God looks on the heart, and that he requires holy and spiritual service of his creatures; that *he seeketh such to worship him, as worship him in spirit and in truth.* He saw at the same time, that in all his religious services, he had been prompted by selfish motives. He saw that in all which he had done, he had had no love to God, and no regard to his glory; but that he had been influenced solely by a desire to promote his own personal interest and happiness. He saw that in all the distress which he had experienced on account of his sin, there was no godly sorrow—no true contrition. He had not hated sin because it was committed against God, but had merely dreaded its consequences. He had taken great pains to cleanse the outside of the cup and the platter, but he now perceived that the inside was full of all uncleanness. And he was thoroughly convinced, that

> "No outward forms could make him clean,
> The leprosy lay deep within."

He had prayed, and wept and promised, but he now saw, that

> "His prayers and tears and vows were vile,
> His duties black with guilt."

During this period he read President Edwards' narrative of the revival of religion in Northampton, and the memoir of Brainerd. These served very much to deepen the conviction of his utterly lost condition. The preaching which he heard from time to time, also greatly distressed him. As he says in his narrative, every sermon condemned him. Nothing gave him any relief. He seemed to be sinking daily deeper and deeper in guilt and wretchedness. One day, while alone in the field, engaged in prayer, his heart rose against God, because he did not hear and answer his prayers. Then the

words of the Apostle, *the carnal mind is enmity against God*, came to his mind with such overwhelming power, as to deprive him of strength, and he fell prostrate on the earth. The doctrines of the Gospel, particularly the doctrines of divine sovereignty and election, were sources of great distress to him. There was much talk respecting these doctrines, at that time, in North Killingworth. Some disbelieved and openly opposed them. He searched the Scriptures with great diligence to ascertain whether they are there taught; and although his heart was unreconciled to them, he dared not deny them, for he was convinced that they were taught in the Bible. He would sometimes say to himself, if I am not elected, I shall not be saved, even if I do repent—then the thought would arise, if I am not elected, I never shall repent. This would cut him to the heart, and dash to the ground all his self-righteous hopes. For a long time he endured these conflicts in his mind. Meanwhile he became fully convinced, that the commands of God are perfectly just, that it was his immediate duty to repent, and that he had no excuse for continuing another moment a rebel against God. At the same time he saw that such was the wickedness of his heart, that he never should repent, unless God should subdue his heart by an act of sovereign grace. With these views of his condition, his distress was sometimes almost insupportable. At one time he really supposed himself to be dying, and sinking into hell. This was the time of which he speaks in his narrative, when he says, "an unusual tremor seized all my limbs, and death appeared to have taken hold upon me." For several hours, his horror of mind was inexpressible. Not long after this, there was a change in his feelings. He felt a calmness for which he knew not how to account. He thought, at first, that he had lost his convictions, and was going back to stupidity. This alarmed him, but still he could not recall his former feelings. A sweet peace pervaded his soul. The objects which had given him so much distress, he now con-

templated with delight. He did not, however, for several days suppose that he had experienced a change of heart; but finding at length that his views and feelings accorded with those expressed by others whom he regarded as the friends of Christ, he began to think it possible that he might have passed from death unto life. The more he examined himself, the more evidence he found that a great change had been wrought in his views and feelings respecting divine things. Old things had passed away—all things had become new. The character of God now appeared lovely. The Saviour was exceedingly precious; and the doctrines of grace, towards which he had felt such bitter opposition, he contemplated with delight. He had now no doubt of their truth. He saw clearly that if there was any good thing in him towards the Lord God of Israel, it was not the result of any effort of his own, but of the sovereign and distinguished will of God. He was ready to say with the Apostle, *by the grace of God, I am what I am.* He knew that if God had left him to himself, he should have persisted in the road to ruin. It was no longer a question with him, whether the natural heart is destitute of holiness, and opposed to God—or whether it is necessary that the sinner should be born again by the special operations of the Holy Spirit. What the Scriptures teach on these points, was confirmed by his experience. He had the witness in himself of the truth of these doctrines. And so firmly was he established in the belief of them, that his faith never wavered during his life. He now felt a peculiar love for the people of God, and a delight in the duties of religion, to which before, he was a total stranger.

If the reader would know the state of his mind at this period, let him read three or four of the Village Hymns, beginning with the 372, which were intended to describe the feelings of a young convert. He has been heard to say, that

in arranging those hymns, he put those first which described his own feelings at the time of his conversion.

But although he enjoyed great peace of mind, he never expressed a very high degree of confidence that he was a child of God. He had such a deep and abiding sense of the deceitfulness of the human heart, and of the danger of self deception, that not only at this period, but ever afterwards, he was exceedingly cautious in expressing his belief that he was accepted of God. At one time, being asked whether he had any doubts respecting his interest in the promises, he replied, "I have no doubt that I have religious enjoyment; but the question is, whether it is of the right kind." At another time he said, "the most that I have ventured to say respecting myself, is, that I think it possible I may get to heaven." It was always painful to him to hear persons express great confidence of their interest in the divine favor, unless they were persons of eminent piety. He feared they did not realize how deceitful the human heart is.

It was about ten months, as has been already intimated, from the time when Mr. Nettleton's attention was first seriously turned to the subject of religion, before he obtained peace in believing. With him, what the old divines termed the *law-work*, was deep and thorough. This protracted season of conviction gave him a knowledge of the human heart which few possess; and which was doubtless intended by God to prepare him for that pre-eminent success which attended his labors as a minister of Christ. As one observes, "God prepares for himself the souls which he destines to some important work. We must prepare the vessel before we launch it on the mighty deep. If education is necessary for every man, then is a particular education necessary for those who are to influence the generations in which they live."

The following remark of President Edwards in relation to the conversion of David Brainerd, will apply equally to the conversion of Mr. Nettleton. "His convictions of sin pre-

ceding his first consolations in Christ, were exceedingly deep and thorough. His trouble and sorrow arising from a sense of guilt and misery were very great, and long continued, but yet sound and rational, consisting in no unsteady, violent, and unaccountable frights and perturbations of the mind; bu arising from the most serious considerations, and a clear illumination of the conscience to discern and consider the true state of things. The light let into his mind at conversion, and the influences and exercises to which his mind was subject at that time, appear very agreeable to reason, and to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The change was very great and remarkable, yet without any appearance of strong impressions on the imagination, or sudden flights of the affections, or vehement emotions of the animal nature. It was attended with just views of the supreme glory of the divine being, consisting in the infinite dignity and beauty of the perfection of his nature, and of the transcendent excellency of the way of salvation by Christ."

The preceding is from a sermon at the funeral of Brainerd.

CHAPTER II.

His desire to preach the Gospel, and to become a missionary to the heathen.—Difficulties in the way of obtaining an education.—The manner in which he overcame them.—College life.—Acquaintance with Samuel J. Mills.—Appointment as Butler in College.—Theological education at Milford, under the instruction of the Rev. Mr. Pinneo.—License to preach the Gospel.—The reason why he did not become a Missionary.

In the year 1801, the father of Mr. Nettleton died. As he was the oldest son, the care of the family, and the management of the farm devolved upon him. It had been his expectation to spend his days in agricultural pursuits; but God had designed him for a different course of life. After the change in his feelings, described in the preceding chapter, his mind dwelt much on the worth of the soul, and the deplorable condition of those who have no interest in Christ; and he had the most intense desires to be instrumental in the salvation of his fellow men. While laboring in the field, he would often say to himself, "if I might be the means of saving one soul, I should prefer it to all the riches and honors of this world." He would frequently look forward to eternity, and put to himself the question, "what shall I wish I had done, thousands and millions of years hence?" About this time, he became exceedingly interested in the short accounts which were published in the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine, of the operations of the London Missionary Society, and of the Baptist Missionary Society in England. These awakened in his breast a strong desire to become a missionary to the heathen; and he decided to devote his life to the missionary service, if

God, in his Providence, should prepare the way. This purpose was afterwards greatly strengthened by the perusal of Horne's Letters on Missions. The feelings which Samuel J. Mills expressed to his father soon after his conversion, were precisely the feelings of young Nettleton at this period, viz: "*That he could not conceive of any course of life in which to pass the rest of his days, that would prove so pleasant, as to go and communicate the gospel salvation to the poor heathen.*"

It has been already remarked, that Samuel J. Mills and Asahel Nettleton were born on the same day. It is a remarkable fact, that their *new and spiritual birth* occurred very nearly at the same time*—that the conversion of both was signally marked—and that from the commencement of their christian course, they seem to have been imbued with the same spirit, and to have devoted themselves to the same employment. And here I cannot refrain from quoting a few sentences from the memoir of Mills. "Thus early did a sovereign God who has pity on the heathen, set apart Samuel J. Mills for a missionary. Though a youth of but sixteen,† he discovered a zeal in the missionary cause, an eagerness in the pursuit of missionary intelligence, and an enlargement of thought in his plans to become acquainted with the unevangelized world, which left little doubt that he was chained to his purpose by a superior power. It was heart yearning over the miseries of perishing millions, that first led him to think of acquiring an education with a view to the gospel ministry. The spirit of God came over him like Elisha in the field. While toiling at the plough, was his heart touched with compassion for the heathen world, and he bid adieu to his farm to obtain an education, on purpose to carry the gospel to millions who were perish-

* The conversion of Mills occurred in November, 1801. That of Nettleton, about two months earlier.

† This is a mistake. It ought to be eighteen. It appears from a statement on a preceding page of the memoir, that his conversion took place in November, 1801, when he was eighteen years old.

ing for lack of knowledge. Thus in a retired field in Litchfield county, was the king of Zion beginning that grand course of operations, which have produced such a revolution in the American churches, and which bear so intimate a relation to the progressive glories of his kingdom!" All this, excepting the name of the county, was as true of Nettleton as of Mills, and very nearly at the same time.

It is a striking fact, that while these two individuals seem to have been the first in this country (in these latter days,) to devote themselves to the missionary work, neither of them was permitted to enter upon it. It happened to them as to David, in relation to the building of the temple. They did well that it was in their hearts to go to the heathen; but the honor of actually going, was reserved for others. The reasons which prevented Mills from becoming a missionary to the heathen, are already before the public. Those which prevented Nettleton, will be given in the sequel.

In acquiring a collegiate education, he had many difficulties and discouragements to encounter. His pecuniary means were entirely inadequate; and in those days, there were no Education societies, and no funds for the support of indigent students. Such also, were the circumstances of the family, recently deprived of its head, as to render his presence and labor at home, apparently indispensable. So strong however, was his desire to become a minister of the gospel, and a missionary to the heathen, that he resolved to make the attempt to obtain an education. He procured some books, and while laboring on the farm, dovoted his leisure moments to study. In the winter he taught school, and spent his evenings in study, occasionally reciting to his pastor. Thus, in the course of two or three years, with very little instruction, and while laboring most of the time on the farm, except when engaged in school-keeping, he mastered the preparatory studies, and entered the Freshman class in Yale College, about the middle of the first term, in the fall of 1805.

When Mr. Nettleton entered college, he was the only professor of religion in his class. Some others, however, entered before the close of the year, one of whom was his friend and fellow townsman, Philander Parmele. Some part of the time while a member of college, he taught a school in New Haven, to procure the means of defraying his expenses. He felt a deep interest in the spiritual welfare of the children committed to his care, and he had the happiness to know, that many of them became the hopeful subjects of divine grace, under his preaching, in the revival of 1815.

The following account of Mr Nettleton's college life, is from the Rev. Jonathan Lee.

"I was classmate with Mr. Nettleton during the two last years of our college life, and roomed with him through the junior year. Having entered one year before him, and thus belonging to the next preceding class, till the expiration of my Sophomore and his Freshman year; and then being kept out of college and broken off from my studies by a severe malady, for one whole year, I formed but little acquaintance with him, till I returned again to college, and joined his class at the beginning of their junior year, in October, 1807. My previous observation of him in his class, had left the impression that he was a modest and inoffensive youth, of unpolished manners, but unexceptionable in moral deportment, and bearing the marks of a peculiar interest, solemnity and devotedness in the religious worship, and at the communion seasons in the chapel. Providence brought us in contact, now, in new and unanticipated circumstances. I was standing in melancholy mood, in the south door of the then middle or old college, disheartened at the loss of a year in standing, a stranger to the class, and with no room or room-mate engaged, reluctant to make application to any one, supposing their arrangements in this respect, had been already made. Nettleton passing by, seemed attracted by my sombre attitude, and down-cast aspect, and approaching, kindly inquired whether I

had obtained a room-mate, and learning by my reply that I had not, offered himself to room with me. The circumstances of this proffer, and the manner of its being made, gave a new and peculiar impression to my mind in regard to him, as it showed a readiness to relinquish his previous designs on the subject, to relieve my anxiety, and show me a kindness. It was an expression of unsought, but timely and generous friendship, (as various facts connected with his offer convinced me,) which is not often met with, in the intercourse of youth at college. I thankfully accepted his overture, which removed a heavy burden from my spirit and carried conviction to my heart, that I had found a friend in whom it was safe to confide. From that day to this, greatly as I was grieved to leave my former class, to which I felt strongly attached, I have regarded the hand of Providence in bringing me into intimacy with that godly young man, as claiming my liveliest gratitude. It was the good hand of God upon me; it was the sovereignty of his love, that chastened the aspirations for literary distinction, and after calling in the day of adversity to consider, led me to daily converse with one who showed the nature and superlative value of unostentatious, consistent piety, and this at the most solemn crisis in my individual history.

"On becoming more particularly acquainted with Nettleton, I perceived that he was one who feared God. Ever kind, courteous, conscientious and exemplary, unassuming and unostentatious; his words and actions bore the most powerful testimony in my conscience, to the genuineness of his religious principles. He evidently had a taste for the spiritual themes and exercises pertaining to religion, so predominant and controlling, as to leave small space for merely literary ambition. His best loved place was the chapel, listening with devout solemnity, to the prayers and preaching of the venerated Dwight. His best loved book was the Bible. His best loved day was the Sabbath—and his best loved friends, were

those who knew the joys and sorrows of a pious heart. He was intimate with only a few select companions, of congenial spirit, and who felt most interested in communing together upon the topics of doctrinal and experimental religion.

"In regard to his standing as a scholar, it is true, he was not, in this respect, distinguished, as he never rose above the ordinary rank in the common course of classical studies. This I attribute, not to a defect of native talent, but to the following causes.

"1. He was remarkably diffident of his own powers, so far as to be restrained and embarrassed in his recitations and literary performances before the class; and the same state of feeling prevented that resolute, persevering application necessary for eminence.

"2. The state of his health through a part of the year, when he roomed with me, was much impaired, and in connection with this, he passed through a protracted season of deep mental anxiety and depression in the spring of 1808, in which he greatly questioned the genuineness of his christian experience. So severe were his mental trials of this nature, as to unfit him for study, for some time, and he was excused and permitted to return home, on account of the state of his health. Before returning home, he was wont to repair to the President for instruction and counsel, and he directed him to the perusal of Edwards on Religious Affections, and loaned him also, his manuscript sermons on the Evidences of Regeneration. With them he went into the most intensely earnest and sifting self-examination that I ever witnessed, and in the course of it, he passed through such agony of spirit, as was suited to awaken the liveliest sympathy in those who could best understand and appreciate the nature of his distress. The all-absorbing question resting on his mind by day and by night, mingled with many sighs, tears and groans, was, am I a child of God? Before the next term he gained peace, and enjoyed a better state of health; but it is evident.

that this interruption of his progress in regular study, had a retarding effect upon his scholarship, though it may have had a momentous influence in giving him uncommon spiritual discernment, and in fitting him for that sphere of distinguished usefulness on which he afterwards entered.

"3. The peculiar taste and tendencies of Nettleton's mind, led him to bestow his intellectual energies, not upon physical sciences, and elegant literature, but upon those subjects in mental and moral philosophy, which stood most closely connected with the truths of theology. In topics of this nature, he ever manifested an uncommon interest, and quickness of thought, with clearness of perception and power of discrimination. It was evidently a favorite employment to engage in friendly discussions upon such themes, with those who were disposed to investigate them; particularly with students in theology then residing at Yale College. At such times, his countenance, though not specially expressive in ordinary circumstances, would light up with animation, and his eye sparkle with brilliance, plainly indicating that then his mind was in its chosen element. In whatever enlisted his feelings, he was manifestly capable of close and successful investigation. But aiming at a higher mark than mere literary or scientific distinction, he sought to furnish his mind with that knowledge which relates directly to the great ends of human existence, the present and immortal interests of the soul. During his last year in college, he roomed with his beloved christian brother, Philander Parmele, and it is my impression, that with him, he devoted what time could be spared from customary classical studies, to the study of theology. In the exercises of the class he took a higher rank than in the preceding year, and acquitted himself with respectability. With these statements, however, truth compels me to admit, that I had not then discovered in him any such traits of intellectual character as led to anticipations in any measure corres-

pondent with the well known facts of his subsequent history.*

"Nettleton was held in respect by all in college, but peculiarly loved, and highly esteemed by christian professors. His spirit was excellent, and his example unexceptionable. If any affected to look superciliously upon him, on account of the plainness and simplicity of his manners, they knew and felt his superior moral worth. He was a vigilant observer of the indications of religious seriousness and anxiety among the students, and took the earliest and liveliest interest in all such cases. Burdened as I myself was, with the danger and misery of my impenitent state, in the forepart of the year, when I roomed with him, he was not slow to discover the fact, though not officious to insist upon a disclosure of my feelings. As he was a professor of religion, I proposed, soon after he became my room-mate, to unite with him in prayer, after the close of the studies of each evening, expecting only to read the scriptures as my part of the exercise. He agreed to pray, *if I also would.* Fearing to decline, though trembling at the solemnity of such an engagement, I felt necessitated by my conscience to comply with the condition, and take my turn in prayer, and it was thus that I was first led to utter the words of supplication in the audience of any human being. It was a mighty effort, and made with faltering tongue and aching heart. He found that I had gone farther than he expected, and afterwards once asked me, if I considered myself a Christian, and upon my replying no, he inquired, why then do you pray? His object I have supposed, was to deepen my conviction of guilt, and it had that effect. To my answer, I feel it my duty to pray, he added no remark, discovering probably, that my wretched prayers gave me no comfort, but increased the heavy burden pressing upon my heart. More

* President Dwight is reported to have said of Nettleton, while a member of College, "He will make one of the most useful men this country has ever seen." This is one among many instances of the sagacity of that great man.

than once, after these seasons, when I have been weeping over my lost condition, that kind friend has approached my pillow upon retiring to his own bed, and has gently endeavored to elicit an expression of my feelings. When seeing me afraid to disclose my state of mind, he has withdrawn, sometimes as I have reason to believe, to unite with some christian brother in prayer, on my behalf, and thus committed my case and that of others, to that God who had taken me in hand, and who alone could renew my heart.

"At this time, in the winter of 1807–8, a revival of religion began in New Haven, and in Yale College. The first subjects of it among the students were in the Freshman class. Nettleton was no indifferent spectator, but among the first to discover indications of special religious impressions, and to seek out persons in a state of religious anxiety. Then, contrary to what I had before witnessed of intimacy between the upper and lower classes, often did I see him with one or two heart-burdened youth of the youngest class, walking arm in arm in the college yard, before evening prayers, conversing upon the great interests of the soul. I observed that so soon as he became acquainted with a student under religious impressions, his company and counsel were sought and greatly prized; and it was manifest that his conversation with such individuals, his silent and unostentatious labors, in connection with his christian brethren in their meeting for prayer and conference, held a very prominent and important place in that memorable and joyful season. His feelings were most deeply interested in the whole progress of the revival, and it seemed almost to absorb his mind by day and by night."

In addition to the foregoing statement, a few other facts connected with the history of his college life, will now be mentioned.

In the American Quarterly Register for February, 1838, there is a history of revivals in Yale College. On page 299,

in the account of the revival in 1808, is the following statement.

"There was one case in this revival, which awakened very general sympathy, and to which I shall advert for a moment, because it shows how God sometimes makes use of the sufferings of one, to subdue the obstinacy of another. A member of one of the lower classes, became deeply anxious for his spiritual welfare, at the commencement of the seriousness. He was, indeed, the first person in college, probably, who was under conviction of sin. As the work went on, others who were awakened at a much later period, were apparently brought into the kingdom, and were rejoicing in hope, while he was left in the bitterness of despair, with the arrows of the Almighty drinking up his spirit. His health rapidly declined under his sufferings. He was confined in a great measure to his bed; and it was feared that, with a feeble constitution, he must soon sink under the weight of his distress, unless relief should be obtained. In an adjoining room there lived an avowed disbeliever in spiritual religion, who denied the reality of a divine influence in revivals, and from the commencement of the present work, had regarded those who were concerned in it with scorn. A christian friend, who knew his sentiments, asked him to visit the sufferer, and led him toward the bed-side. He stood for a moment looking at the emaciated form before him, he listened to the exclamations which told the distress and horror of an awakened conscience, and then turning, went back to his room, to weep there under a sense of his own sin. Not long after, to the wonder of all his companions, it was said of him, as of Saul of Tarsus, 'Behold he prayeth.' He became at once, a decided and exemplary christian. He afterwards entered into the ministry, and devoted himself to the cause of missions; and has been for more than twenty years, an active and successful laborer upon heathen ground."

The reader may be interested to learn the issue of those

sufferings which led to this happy result. I shall give the relation in the words of one who is best able to speak on this subject. It was just at the close of the term and late at night. "A few christian friends lingered about the bed of the agonized and despairing sinner; and many were the prayers offered, that the balm of Gilead might be applied to his wounded spirit. At length a messenger was dispatched to summon the President, as it seemed to those in attendance, that unless relief were had, death must close the scene. The hour was late—but he promptly attended the call, and came emphatically, as one sent of God, as the bearer of good tidings of great joy. For a short time he seemed overwhelmed; so deeply did he share in the agony of the agonized. At length, however, taking a seat by the bed-side, he gradually directed the anxious inquirer unto the divine sufficiency, the infinite fullness of the Lord Jesus—recited the invitations of the gospel, and then followed his paternal counsel by prayer to God. That prayer, it is believed, was heard, and the words which he spake were a healing balm from on high. A sweet serenity seemed to steal over the agitated sinner's mind—a serenity which was the harbinger of a joy that came in a short time after, and was 'unspeakable and full of glory.'"

In a letter from the individual whose case is described in the foregoing statement, he says, "the christian friend" there mentioned, "was Mr. Nettleton. The infidel was Mr, ——, [now a missionary of the American Board.] The messenger who went for President Dwight, was Mr. Nettleton. He remained with me all night. He was besieging the throne of grace. His whole soul seemed bent on my deliverance. Man never pleadèd with more fervency, and I cannot doubt that I was more indebted to him for my relief than to any other person. He took such an interest in my salvation, as evinced the deepest love for my soul. I think he was a professor of religion before he entered college. What was the character of his piety up to the spring of 1808, of course, I

know not. But I well recollect that soon after I was brought under conviction, he found me out, and became one of my spiritual guides. I am not quite certain, whether his exercises which I am about to mention, existed in the earlier part of the revival, or a little later. My impression is, that the revival found him, in common with other professors, comparatively asleep. But he was soon enlisted, and evinced great interest in the work. In a little time, however, he fell into a melancholy and desponding state, which at length bordered upon despair. He gave up his hope and to me appeared to be a most miserable man. I have known him to weep, I may say, by the hour, under an overwhelming sense of his vileness. He would often say, 'I seem to love christians, but I am so unworthy—I hope they will not cast me off—do you think they will allow such a poor sinner as I am to keep company with them?' Whatever peculiarity there was in his case, (and I think his exercises were singular,) here was involved in it a deep conviction of sin—such a loathing of himself, as I scarcely remember to have heard any other man express. It was difficult to convince him that God could have mercy on one so vile. Yet he was all this time manifesting a deep interest in the cause of Christ and the salvation of souls."

The mind of Mr. Nettleton, as is hinted by Mr. Lee, was much turned to theological studies, during his collegiate course. Theology indeed, had been his favorite study, ever since his attention was turned to the subject of religion. Even before he entered college, he had read with attention a large part of the writings of Edwards, Hopkins, and Bellamy; and before he graduated, he was better acquainted with systematic theology, than many young men are, who are licensed to preach the gospel. He took a deep interest in doctrinal discussions, and ably vindicated the doctrines of grace, against the objections which were urged against them. During his senior year, there was much discussion among the professors

of religion, and theological students in college, respecting the means of grace. This was occasioned by the sermons which were preached at that time by President Dwight on that subject, and which are published in the fourth volume of his theological discourses. In these sermons, the idea is advanced, that the prayers and strivings of awakened sinner although they possess no moral goodness, are not to be regarded, in all cases, as positively sinful.*

Mr. Nettleton entertained a high respect for Dr. Dwight. On almost all subjects, he received his views without hesitation, and considered it a great privilege to sit under his instructive preaching. But on this point he differed from him, as did also a large part of the pious students in college. He believed with Hopkins, and the New England divines generally, that sinners, properly speaking, never use, but always abuse the means of grace—that in all their efforts to escape future misery, and secure future happiness, they are influenced by unholy motives, and that their religious services are mercenary and sinful. In this opinion, which appeared to him to be clearly taught in the scriptures, he was greatly confirmed by his own religious experience. While under conviction of

* The following is an extract from one of these sermons.

"To ask of God for happiness and final safety, is not necessarily insincere, nor guilty, even in sinners. When sinners ask for mere mercy, or mere happiness, or mere safety, they may desire either as truly as saints; although their desires are not virtuous. So far as their desires are merely natural, inseparable from their nature, and sincere, they are not morally wrong; nor are they exhibited in the scriptures, as objects of divine anger. Accordingly the prayer of the publican, who was, I think, plainly a sinner, was not regarded with mere anger by God; and was exactly such a prayer as I have mentioned; a prayer for mere mercy and safety. *He went down to his house justified rather than the Pharisee*, because he had in some important respects, a just sense of his character, and a sincere desire to be delivered from the dangers of it, while the Pharisee had neither."

[Few orthodox men would probably agree with Dr. Dwight in supposing the publican to represent an unrenewed sinner. He has been generally regarded as a striking example of genuine repentance.]

sin, he had such discoveries of his own heart, as to impress indelibly upon his mind, a conviction of the entire sinfulness of the religious services of unrenewed men. There was no one point in theology, on which his mind was more fully established than this; or on which he more strenuously insisted, during his life, both in the pulpit, and in his conversation with awakened sinners. He considered it a point of great practical importance, and particularly useful in destroying the self-righteous hopes of sinners, and in showing them their utterly lost condition, and entire dependence on the grace of God. This was a weapon which he wielded with great power, and which seemed to be in his hands, pre-eminently the Sword of the Spirit.

The following extract of a letter written to his friend Parmele, soon after he graduated, will show, not only what were his views on this subject at that period, but also how capable he was of defending them.

"With respect to the works of the unregenerate—of those especially who think they understand the way of salvation by Christ, I would answer a few things. My friend, you know there are various ways (if I may so speak,) of painting truth to the understanding. The actions of the body in the first place, are neither good nor bad in themselves, any more than the rustling of a leaf or the motions of any other matter. What then? Why the motions or operations of the heart are the only good or bad actions in the sight of God. God looks on the heart. And it is impossible that any thing should be morally good or bad in any other sense than as God regards it. True, men may call all manner of wickedness, good; but does giving it the name, by any wonderful process infuse into it the nature of good? If not, then let us inquire what God calls good, and what evil. Now I can conceive of only three states in which it is possible for the mind to be, in respect to any object—*Love*, *Hatred* or *Indifference*. Now these are not nice distinctions—finely spun out—they are distinctions

which we must understand, or we cannot know what is good, or what is evil in a moral sense. Love, hatred, or indifference to God as the object, either directly or indirectly, in ways unnumbered, are the only possible ways of sinning, or doing moral good.

"1. Do unregenerate men love God? If so, then reason says there is no regeneration. 'Every one that loveth is born of God.' 'God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him.' It is intuitively evident, then, that if *all* who love God are regenerated, or born of God, all who are *not* born of God, do not love him. Besides, all who are not born of God, the scriptures say, are in the flesh. 'That which is born of the flesh, is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit, is spirit.' 'They that are in the flesh,' or are not born of the spirit, the Apostle says '*cannot* please God.' I would ask then, for an answer to this plain question, can he who *cannot please God*, do anything acceptable to him? Or does God *require* him to do what is not acceptable to him? Should it be said, it may be accepted on account of the merits of Christ; I would answer, what have those to do with the merits of Christ, or *even the name* of Christ, who reject him, and who '*will not come unto him?*'—who are, the very moment when they pray, in heart his betrayers and murderers! But it will be said, although they are not regenerate, yet they are well-wishers,—they are *seeking* earnestly to become christians—they know that without Christ they must forever perish; it would therefore, not only be cruel, but very unjust to give them the lie, by telling them they reject Christ and are his enemies. Let Christ answer. 'He that is not with me, is *against* me.' And besides, that they are not regarded for their own doings, nor their doings on account of the merits of Christ, is evident; for it would be as much inconsistent with the moral perfections of God, to regard the doings of the unregenerate, as it would be if Christ had never died. It is the

same thing with regard to the unregenerate, while they remain thus, as if Christ had never died.

"If then, nothing is done acceptable to God where love is absent, it needs no proof to show that what is done in the exercise of hatred, or in indifference, is neither acceptable nor required. But to leave this mode of reasoning, whence is it that those who have good evidence that they are born again, and enjoy the consolations of the divine spirit, renounce the opinion against which I am now contending, and begin to adopt the very language of the blind man when restored to sight, 'now we know that God heareth not sinners?'

"But the reason why the genuine gospel is not received by the unrenewed is as plain as the sun in the heavens. You remember what it is, that 'is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' The genuine gospel has ever been considered an insult to the public taste. I care not for correctness of sentiment—for natural amiableness or suavity of disposition, and for the whole host of natural affections—wherever the true gospel comes—wherever it is explained and understood, if it be not cordially received and embraced, it will assuredly awaken disgust and provoke abhorrence. Nor can it be otherwise; for its principal design is to mortify the pride of man, and to display the glory of sovereign grace—to level all human excellence in the dust, and to elevate even to thrones of glory, the needy and the wretched—to reject the proud and give grace to the humble. The true gospel pays no respect to the academic, because of his profound learning, nor to the moralist, on account of his upright conduct. It pays not the least regard to the courtier, because of his pompous honors, nor to the devotee on account of his zeal or his righteousness. No, the potent prince and the abject slave, the wise philosopher, and the ignorant rustic, the virtuous lady and the *infamous prostitute, all stand on the same level in its comprehensive sight.* Its business is with the worthless and miserable wherever it finds them. If these be

relieved, its end is accomplished—its work is done. To reward these is its supreme delight. But the self-sufficient of every rank, are treated by it with the utmost reserve, and behold by it with a *constant and most steady contempt.* The hungry it filleth with good things, but the rich it sendeth empty away. In short, all the fine words which are spoken—the sociability and extreme politeness with which she is treated, and the high commendations ['good master,' 'Lord, Lord,'] with which she is loaded from the *good-hearted, well-wishing world,* can never provoke her stern and angry countenance into a smile, or a single look of complacency. But on the truly contrite, she looks with a cheering smile and a heavenly countenance, to revive and cheer the drooping heart of the contrite ones. O, glorious gospel, heavenly messenger of good tidings! Welcome sweet messenger of peace! Friend, I believe that the Christian who sees his own heart in the light of the gospel, is really and heartily ashamed of his very best performances. Grace hath laid the foundation of the sinner's hope. Grace erects the building, and the head stone thereof shall be brought forth with shoutings, crying grace, grace unto it."

During his junior year in college, he became acquainted with Samuel J. Mills. This was brought about in the following manner. Simeon Woodruff, a classmate and intimate friend of Nettleton, happened one vacation to fall in company with Mills, and heard him converse on the subject of missions, and his plans of life. "You talk," said Woodruff, "just like one of my classmates. He says, he intends never to be settled, but to be a missionary to the heathen." Mills was so much interested in this intelligence, that he took a journey to New Haven, on purpose to become acquainted with Nettleton. They spent much time in consultation, and were happy to find a perfect coincidence of views on the subject of missions. Mills informed him of Hall, and others of his acquaintance, who entertained similar views. The next year, Mills having

graduated at Williams' College, spent a few months as a resident graduate at Yale. "His ostensible object," says his biographer, "was the study of theology; but his real object was to ascertain whether there were not some kindred spirits in this Institution, who could be excited and encouraged in this glorious enterprise." It was not, perhaps, known to his biographer, that there was one kindred spirit in that Institution, with whom he had already become acquainted, and with whom he wished to hold further intercourse. He and Nettleton conferred much on the subject, and entered into an agreement to avoid all entangling alliances, and to hold themselves in readiness to go to the heathen, whenever God, in his Providence should prepare the way. They also formed the purpose of meeting the next year at Andover, and while pursuing their theological studies, to mature their plans of future action. This purpose, Mr. Nettleton found himself under the painful necessity of abandoning, on account of a debt which he had contracted while obtaining his education; and which he wished to discharge, as soon as possible. Both he and Mills, felt the disappointment deeply. Mills advised him to make application to some friends to liquidate the debt for him; but this he was unwilling to do; and soon after he graduated, at the earnest solicitation of Dr. Dwight, he accepted the office of Butler in college. This office he held nearly a year, devoting what leisure time he could command, to theological studies. He then repaired to Milford, and put himself under the instruction of the Rev. Bezaleel Pinneo, with whom he remained until he received license to preach the gospel.

Mr. Pinneo, in a letter to the writer, thus speaks of him.

"I have no recollection of noticing any thing extraordinary in respect to his piety. I had been acquainted with him before. He was, indeed, while a member of College, considerably distinguished for his piety, and strict orthodoxy. He very much disliked Dr. Dwight's idea of the prayers and

doings of the unregenerate, being in certain cases without sin, and of a mere neutral character. *Doctrinal theology* was the great subject of his meditation, study and delight, to which he gave his strength from the first. Nor was it with him a matter of dry speculation. His christian experience grew out of a cordial belief and reception of these doctrines, and was modified by them; so that his christian character was uncommonly mature at this period, for one of his years; or rather I may say, for one who had been no longer in the vineyard. He was not born a sickly puny child, but of uncommon health and vigor, as appears by his not conferring with flesh and blood, but devoting himself to the service of God, in its most self-denying forms; resolving by the will of God, to preach the gospel to the heathen; a duty, which at that time, had but just begun to be thought of."

Mr. Nettleton was licensed to preach, by the West Association of New Haven county, at the house of the Rev. Dr. Trumbull, in North Haven, May 28th, 1811.*

In June, 1810, Messrs. Judson, Nott, Mills and Newell, at that time, members of the Theological Seminary at Andover, presented themselves before the General Association of Massachusetts, in Bradford, and made known their convictions of the duty and importance of personally attempting a mission to the heathen, and requested the advice of the Association. This movement, it is well known, led to the organization of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Mr. Nettleton was at this time Butler in Yale College. Had he gone to Andover after he graduated, as he intended, he would doubtless have been one of the company. When he heard what had been done, he lamented with tears, that he could not have been there. He feared that it was an indication of Providence, that he was not to be permitted to become a missionary. His purpose, however, remained steadfast.

* He was ordained as an evangelist, by the South Consociation of Litchfield county, in the summer of 1817.

The reader is doubtless anxious, by this time, to know why Mr Nettleton did not become a missionary, as he intended. The reasons can be stated in few words. Soon after he began to preach, his labors were crowned with signal success. Wherever he went, the Spirit of God seemed to accompany his preaching. His brethren in the ministry, witnessing the success of his labors, were of opinion that he ought, at least, to delay the execution of his purpose to leave the country. In deference to their opinion, he consented to delay; and as his labors became increasingly successful, his brethren were more and more convinced that God had called him to labor as an evangelist at home. Still, he never entirely abandoned the idea of a foreign mission, until his health failed in 1822

CHAPTER III.

His labors in the eastern part of Connecticut, where he obtains a knowledge of the measures which were adopted by Davenport, and others, in the great revival of 1740, and of their results in producing a moral desolation.—His acquaintance with certain evangelists.—His opinion of the expediency of employing evangelists as assistants of settled pastors.

AFTER receiving license to preach, Mr. Nettleton refused to consider himself a candidate for settlement, because he intended and expected to engage in the missionary service as soon as the Providence of God should prepare the way. He chose therefore to commence his labors in waste places, and in some the most desolate parts of the Lord's vineyard. He accordingly went to the eastern part of Connecticut, on the borders of Rhode Island. Here he preached for a few months, in several places which had long been destitute of settled pastors, and which had been overrun by fanatical sects of various descriptions. In some of these places, there had once been flourishing churches, with excellent pastors; but they had been made desolate more than half a century before, by the measures which Davenport and other evangelists of that period, introduced. He became acquainted with some aged people, who gave him an account of the proceedings of that day, and of their results as they had been developed in the course of half a century. He also found some pamphlets and books from which he obtained much important information respecting the disorders which prevailed after the revival of 1740.* He has often spoken with deep interest of this

* There is a very good account of these disorders in an old pamphlet, containing nine sermons by the Rev. Joseph Fish, pastor of a church in Stonington.

period of his labors, and of the use which the information he at that time obtained, was to him in after life. He learned that those who labor as evangelists, even if they have the

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preached in 1763. He seems to have been a sound and faithful minister of the gospel. He was the pastor of a large and flourishing church, which had shared richly in the revival of 1740. But his parish was one of the theatres of Davenport's operations, the result of which was, as he informs us in his preface, that not less than two-thirds of his congregation withdrew from his ministry, and formed themselves into separate societies. The sermons were preached twenty years after these separations took place, and their object was to make the youth of his flock acquainted with the scenes through which their church and society had passed. As this pamphlet is but little known at the present day, and as the facts which it contains, are well worthy to be preserved, I have thought it might be useful to make a few extracts.

"About twenty-three or twenty-four years go, there was the most wonderful work of God that ever was known in this part of the world, both for the extent, and visible appearance of it. It seems there was a general thoughtfulness about religion prevailing in the minds of the people, before they made it manifest by word. The ministers of Christ were stirred up to preach with uncommon zeal and solemnity, and the people were as ready to hear with unusual attention, while the things of eternity were charged home to the conscience.

"The work went on gloriously. The standing ministers, (there being no other then in the land,) became more abundant and fervent in their labors, as they saw their people were attentive to hear. Nor did they labor in vain. Scarce a sermon could be preached, but the hearts of the people, more or less, would be touched, and some deeply affected. While we were thus engaged in religion, a new and surprising scene opened upon us; even such religious operations and appearances as engaged both the careless, and the serious, to come and see and hear for themselves. In these strange operations, there was a marvellous mixture of almost every thing *good and bad*—truth and error, chaff and wheat. For while the spirit of God wrought *powerfully*, Satan raged *maliciously*, and acted his old subtle part to deceive. This happened, or at least was carried to the highest pitch, under the preaching and ministrations of a wonderful, strange, good man, (the Rev. James Davenport of Long Island,) who visited these parts in the time of our religious concern and awakening; a young man of undoubted real piety, fervent zeal for God, love to souls, and ardent desire to advance the Redeemer's kingdom. But, (thus it was permitted,) a man, while with us, under the powerful influence of a *false spirit*, in a great part of his conduct, as *many* then told him, and as he himself did afterwards acknowledge with deep abasement. Satan taking the advantage of his zeal in religion, transformed himself into an angel of light, and hurried him into extremes; yea, artfully carried him beside the truth and duty, and beyond the bounds of decency. * * * "The things promoted by him that were evidently and dreadfully wrong, are such as these. He not only gave an unrestrained liberty to *noise and outcry*

best intentions, are in peculiar danger of mistaking false for true zeal; and of being betrayed into great indiscretions. He learned also, that the imprudences of one evangelist may

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both of *distress and joy* in time of divine service, but promoted both with all his might." * * * "Those persons that passed immediately from great distress to great joy and delight, (which 'tis true, have their place in religion,) after asking them a few questions, were instantly proclaimed *converts*, or said to have *come to Christ*, and upon it the assembly were told that a number, it may be *ten* or *fifteen* have come to Christ already, who will come next? When (I desire to speak it with sorrow) numbers of such *converts*, in a little time, returned to their old way of living—were as carnal, wicked, and void of christian experience as ever they were. Again—He was a great favorer of *visions*, *trances*, *imaginations and powerful impressions* upon the mind in others, and made such inward *feelings* the rule of his conduct in *many respects*; especially if the impression came with *a text of scripture*, which he looked upon to be *opened* to him at such a time and in such cases, pointing out his duty which he would accordingly pursue. Upon such powerful impressions and openings of scripture, he went to Boston, strongly persuaded that multitudes in *that great city*, (to use his own expressions,) would be converted by his preaching there. But as Mr. Edwards rightly observes, such circumstances attending religious affections are no sure sign that they are *gracious* or truly religious. He was a great encourager, if not the first setter up of public *exhorters*; not restricting them to the gospel rule or order of *brotherly* exhortations; but encouraging *any lively zealous* christians, (so reputed) to exhort *publicly*, in full assemblies, with all the *air and assurance* of ministerial authoritative exhorting; although they were exceeding *raw and unskillful* in the word of righteousness, and altogether unequal to the solemn undertaking. However, they being very warm and zealous, spake *boldly and freely*, [which qualities of speech, by the way, Mr. Edwards judiciously observes, are no sure signs of gracious, religious affections,] and so were highly esteemed —had in admiration, and preferred before *the letter learned rabbis, scribes, and pharisees, and unconverted ministers*; which *phrases* the good man would frequently use in his sermons, with such peculiar *marks*, not only of *odium*, but of *indication*, as served to beget a jealousy in many of the people's minds, that *their* ministers were the letter-learned, unconverted teachers which he aimed at. And thus the exhorters came into credit among multitudes of people, who chose rather to hear them than their old teachers, which served directly to puff them up with spiritual pride, and fitted them for the daring undertaking which followed. By these means the standing ministers began to fall in their credit and esteem among the people; especially among such as were reckoned the *foremost christians*; many of whom with the *bloated* exhorters, began to treat their ministers with such assurance, haughtiness and contempt as plainly spoke their sentiments that they knew more and better how to *teach*, than *they*; especially if the ministers opposed them, or only questioned whether they were right. And thus the seeds of discord and disunion were sown, and a founda-

produce incalculable evils; evils which will extend through many generations. While surveying these fields of moral desolation, he became deeply impressed with the importance

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tion laid for after *separations*. But what tended more effectually than all that has been said, to prepare the way for separation was this that followed: This zealous good man, from a sense hopefully at first, of the eminent danger of an unconverted *ministry*, both to themselves and the people, was betrayed by the false spirit, into that bold, daring enterprise, of going through the country to *examine* all the *ministers* in private, and then publicly to declare his judgment of their spiritual state. And this he did, whenever he could be admitted to examine them. Some that he examined, [though for aught that appeared,] as godly as himself, were pronounced in his public prayers immediately after examination, to be *unconverted*. And they who declared this design and practice of his to be unscriptural, and so refused to be *examined* by him, were sure to suffer the same fate; they were condemned by him as Christless; or [which amounted to as much with the populace,] he would declare that he had reason to fear they were *unconverted*; in which cases, he could ordinarily have no other ground or reason for his fear, than that of their refusing submission to his *tribunal*. Many good people thinking highly of Mr. Davenport, as though he was authorized from heaven to proceed in this manner, and at the same time, having great regard for their own *ministers*, seemed even as much concerned lest they should not stand the trial, [when examined,] as if they were going before the judge of all the earth. * * * "Now the counsel of this strange man, *which he counselled in those days, was*, [like the counsel of Ahithophel,] *as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God*. Multitudes of honest good people believed every thing that he *said*, and had such a veneration for all that he *did*, that if they could *quote* the *word and example* of Mr. Davenport, 'twas enough with *them* to justify any of the *wild*, unscriptural notions and ways which they through weakness had run into. So that a minister could not gainsay or correct them, under the price of his reputation. The things which I have mentioned, [to which many more might doubtless be added,] were such manifest ERRORS, that even the carnal and ungodly world, could not but see and know they were wrong. And so herein they agreed with some judicious good people and discerning ministers, who opposed them as such. And for this reason, the *good* and the *bad* were ranked together, and frequently run upon by those who were zealous for these things, and declared to be *opposers* of the work of God, and on the *enemy's* side. He that speaks to you, being an eye and ear witness to *all*, or the *substance* of what has been related, is the more free in declaring these things unto you. * * * "Having gone on a year, or more, [if I mistake not,] in the practices above stated, he was, by the gentle treatment and earnest expostulation of some pious and judicious ministers, put upon serious reflection and close examination of his strange conduct in the things which have been related, and others similar to them. And after some months' deliberation, and earnest seeking to the Father of lights, he was deliberately, clearly and fully convinced of his errors. The mask was

of a settled ministry. He saw that where there is no settled ministry, the minds of the people become unsettled in regard to religious truth, and they are easily carried about by "every wind of doctrine;" that errorists of every description come

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thrown aside—the delusions of satan appeared to him in their own horrid light; and the dreadful consequences of his awful mistakes, filled him with deep concern. He was made sensible of the injury he had done to *ministers and churches*; how he had broke the order of the gospel by causing divisions and offences; and on the whole, that he had brought reproach on the glorious work of God, and endangered the souls of men. For these things he was deeply abased; humbled himself before the Lord, and lay in the dust. Hereupon he returned and visited many of the places where he had so grievously erred and offended, to see if he might by any means repair the damage he had done. When he came to this town, it was with such a mild, pleasant, meek and humble spirit, broken and contrite, as I scarce ever saw exceeded or even equalled. He not only owned his fault in private, and in a most christian manner asked forgiveness of some *ministers* whom he had before treated amiss, but in a large assembly, made a public recantation of his errors and mistakes, and particularly mentioned and declared against *some*, if not *all* that I have exposed in this narrative, as well as others that I have not mentioned. He gave a full and solemn testimony to the work of God that was carried on in the land, by the outpouring of his blessed Spirit, in those things that were really and properly *God's* work; and said that he doubted not but that *he*, though [as he added] most unworthy, had been made an instrument for the saving good of many souls; but he declared with all humility and openness of heart, that in many things, such as above, he had grievously erred. He told us how the Lord had led him to a sight of his errors, and convinced him *fully* that he had been under the powerful influence of the false spirit; though in the time of its operation, he verily thought 'twas the spirit of God in a high degree. Thus the good man, [no longer the noisy, boisterous, rash and censorious Davenport, but the meek, humble, and yet the *fervent* man of God,] confessed, bewailed, and *warned* against the errors which he had unhappily spread and promoted. How great and how happy the change! But how is he now received and hearkened to by those zealous people, who, in the time of his wildness and false zeal, were ready to adore him? Why, verily, they that were not convinced of their *own*, and his former mistakes, were far from being pleased by his present conduct. They saw that he was turned *against them*, that is, against some of their darling principles and ways, and thought that he *was now become their enemy*, in those things wherein he only *told* them the truth. They now looked upon him to be cold, dead and lifeless—that he had got away from God, and joined in a great measure with the world of opposers, and *carnal ministers*. In a word, they were sadly disappointed, sorely vexed, or disquieted in their spirits, grievously offended, [that is, numbers of them] and on the whole, they all rejected his message." pp. 114—128.

in and occupy the ground, and that when there is any religious excitement among them, it is peculiarly liable to run into the wildest fanaticism. In the minds of a people thus situated, religion and fanaticism become identified. They know of no other kind of religion, and of course, they seek and expect no other. He found that the churches which had been made desolate by the labors of Davenport and his coadjutors half a century before, had remained desolate until that time—that there still existed among the people, the most violent prejudices against settled pastors, and all regular ecclesiastical organizations. He saw that the same self-righteous and denunciatory spirit which first rent and scattered the churches, was still prevalent, and that those measures which accompany and promote fanaticism; such as calling persons to the anxious seat, requesting them to rise to be prayed for, or to signify that they had given their hearts to God; encouraging females to exhort and pray in promiscuous assemblies, &c., were still rife among them. These measures were adopted in these waste places, not only by Methodists, Freewill Baptists and *Christ-ians*, but by Congregationalists.

It is proper here to state, that there were, at that period, some evangelists of our own denomination, (not unlike some more modern evangelists,) who were in the habit of visiting these waste places, and who imbibed and encouraged the spirit above described. Some of these evangelists appeared to be good men; but they were greatly deficient in prudence, and were often impelled by a false zeal. They were usually found arrayed against settled pastors, and their influence went to promote the interests of the fanatical sects, with which they were in the habit of co-operating in their religious meetings. These evangelists, and those with whom they associated, perceiving that Mr. Nettleton was a young man of zeal, took great pains to draw him into their views, and to infuse nto his mind prejudices against settled pastors, by insinuating that they were enemies to revivals, and thus to secure his co-

operation in their radical movements. But he at once perceived, that they were actuated by a wrong spirit, and that the course which they were pursuing, was adapted not to promote, but to injure the cause of religion. He saw that the whole weight of their influence was employed to increase and perpetuate the prejudices of the people against sound doctrine, and ecclesiastical order; and that so far from repairing the wastes of Zion, they were only making them more desolate.

The knowledge which he obtained while laboring in this region, led him to entertain great respect for the pastoral office. He was convinced that without a settled ministry, there could be no rational prospect of building up churches, or of enjoying genuine revivals of religion; that flocks scattered upon the mountains with no faithful shepherd to watch and feed them, would become the prey of "ravening wolves." He became also convinced that a tremendous responsibility rests upon those who labor as evangelists; and that it is their duty not to weaken the hands of settled pastors, but to do all in their power to strengthen them. This lesson was of immense importance to him, in preparing him for that course of labor to which he was destined; and it is doubtless one reason why he was enabled to shun those indiscretions into which most evangelists have fallen.

We have seen how Mr. Nettleton came to be an evangelist. His brethren persuaded him to relinquish for a season his favorite and long cherished purpose of becoming a missionary to the heathen; and the time never came, while he had health and strength to labor as an evangelist, when they thought it would be right for him to relinquish an employment in which God was favoring him with such signal success. While engaged in this employment, it was his desire to confine his labors to waste places, and destitute congregations; and it was not without great reluctance, and much solicitation, that he consented to labor as an assistant to set-

tled pastors. He was never complained of for thrusting himself into parishes where his assistance was not desired; but the complaint continually was, that it was so difficult to obtain him. The late Dr. Porter of Andover, thus speaks of him in his letters on revivals.

"About the close of the period which I attempted to describe in former letters, the Rev. Asahel Nettleton devoted himself to the work of an evangelist. With his eminent qualifications for this work, and usefulness in it, I presume you are well acquainted. The fact, however, which it is especially to my present purpose to mention, and which probably many of you do not know, is, that this distinguished itinerant found no difficulty to labor with stated pastors without making himself their *rival*. If, in any instance, he could not conscientiously coincide in the views, or co-operate in the measures of a pastor, among whose charge he was invited to labor, he did not sow dissension in that church, nor seek to detach their affections from their minister, but quietly withdrew to another place. The consequence was, that the visits of this devoted servant of Christ, *were always sought*, and never dreaded, nor regretted by ministers or churches."

An instance, probably, cannot be mentioned, in which the influence of Mr. Nettleton led to the dismission of a pastor, but many instances might be mentioned, in which he was instrumental in strengthening the hands of pastors. He would treat ministers with such kindness, and speak of them with such respect, as to make the impression on the minds of their people, that they were worthy of their confidence; and thus not a few, who had almost lost their influence, were firmly reinstated in the affections of their people. In this way he exhibited great wisdom; and when in connection with this fact, we take into consideration the success of his labors, it is not surprising that his visits were so highly prized by ministers and churches.

Having already somewhat anticipated the course of events

it may not, perhaps, be improper to mention in this place, that although the labors of Mr. Nettleton, as an evangelist, were instrumental of such abounding good, unmingled, so far as could be seen, with any evil; yet he himself became convinced that it would be unwise for the churches to adopt the system of supporting an order of evangelists, as assistants to settled pastors. He remembered what he had learned respecting the operations of Davenport and their results; also the false zeal, and improper spirit manifested by certain itinerants with whom he became acquainted when he began to preach; and in addition to these things, he found that certain zealous young men were coming forward every year as evangelists, who by rashness and imprudence, were doing injury to the cause of religion. These things convinced him that if this description of laborers were systematically employed, more evil than good might confidently be expected as the result.

He has often been heard to say, that a few men might be very usefully employed as evangelists, if we could be sure of obtaining men of the right character—men of discretion, who would co-operate with settled pastors, and aid them in putting down irregularities, and promoting order. But believing that most who engage in this service, would be men of a different character, he discouraged the idea of bringing forward and supporting an order of such laborers. This accounts for the stand which he took on this subject in 1820. In that year the General Association of Connecticut appointed a committee to take into consideration the subject of increasing ministerial labor in the several congregations in our connection. When that committee met they invited Mr. Nettleton to meet with them, and requested his opinion as to the expediency of introducing and supporting an order of evangelists. He was told that if he would consent to act as an evangelist for the State, and locate himself in New Haven, in that capacity, the churches would undoubtedly give him an ample support. He

remarked that he had never yet received a dollar from any benevolent society, or public association, and that he did not choose to labor in this way. He moreover gave it as his opinion, that it would be inexpedient to introduce and support an order of evangelists. He foresaw the evils that would be likely to grow out of the system, if it were made permanent; and they were the very evils which were afterwards so strikingly realized in some parts of the country. Through his influence the project was abandoned.

In a letter to the Rev. Lavius Hyde, dated Aug. 24, 1829, he thus alludes to the facts above stated.

"The course which I have pursued as an evangelist, is one that I never dreamed of, as I suppose you know; having designed to be a foreign missionary, from the time I first thought of entering the ministry. I feel grieved and sick, when I think of some who wish to be evangelists, because they are unfit for settled pastors. I have long seen and deplored the evil. Did I inform you that at a meeting of a committee of the General Association of Connecticut, in 1820, a proposition was made to send out a number of evangelists, as the best means of promoting revivals of religion, and that I objected?—that they proposed to give me a salary of $1000, annually, and that I declined receiving any thing in that line?"

CHAPTER IV.

His labors in Derby, South Britain, South Salem, Danbury, Monroe, North Lyme, Hadlyme, Bloomfield, Milton, South Farms, Chester, East Granby, Bolton, Manchester, West Granby.

Of the effects of Mr. Nettleton's labors, during the few months which he spent in the eastern part of Connecticut, I am not able to speak particularly. I have understood, generally, that they were not altogether in vain; that some souls were awakened and hopefully converted to Christ. But for reasons stated in the preceding chapter, he found it to be an unpromising field of labor.

He afterwards preached several Sabbaths in Derby, with some success. A few individuals received impressions which issued, as was believed, in a saving conversion to God.

In the fall of 1812, having received an invitation to preach in South Salem, New York, he stopped on his way thither, at South Britain, Conn., where the author of this memoir then resided. This was the commencement of their acquaintance; an acquaintance, which soon ripened into an endeared friendship that lasted through life. There was at that time, a very interesting revival of religion in South Britain. This induced him to prolong his visit for one week. He preached on the Sabbath, and attended several other religious meetings, besides visiting with the pastor from house to house, and conversing with those who were anxious for their souls. His labors were very acceptable to the people, and there is reason to believe that they were blessed to the saving good of some souls.

His manner at this time, was somewhat peculiar, but not so much so, as to injure his usefulness. His address at the first meeting which he attended, will not soon be forgotten by those who heard it. It was in a school house, crowded with people, not a few of whom were under deep conviction of sin. As he arose, being an entire stranger, every eye was fixed upon him, and a breathless silence pervaded the assembly. With great solemnity he looked upon the congregation, and thus began. "What is that murmur which I hear?—I wish I had a new heart. What shall I do?—They tell me to repent—I can't repent—I wish they would give me some other direction." He thus went on for a short time, personating the awakened sinner, and bringing out the feelings of his heart. He then changed the form of his address, and in a solemn and affectionate manner, appealed to the consciences of his hearers, and showed them that they must repent or perish, that it was their reasonable duty to repent immediately, and that ministers could not direct them to any thing short of repentance, without being unfaithful to their souls. The address produced a thrilling effect, and served greatly to deepen the convictions of those who were anxious.

During the week that he remained in South Britain, he took a lively interest in the revival which was in progress, and he left the place with his heart glowing with love to souls, and with ardent desires that God would give him grace to be faithful to the people among whom he was going to labor. From that time, for ten years, it was his happy lot, to be employed almost constantly in revivals of religion.

He went to South Salem. The church was destitute of a pastor, and was in a cold and backslidden state. Great spiritual apathy existed in the congregation. He preached on the Sabbath, and appointed one or two evening meetings in the course of the week. His preaching produced an immediate solemnity on the minds of the people; and in the course of a fortnight, there was a development of feeling, which made

it apparent that the Spirit of God was operating on many minds. At the close of one of his evening meetings, several youths repaired to his lodgings in deep distress, to inquire what they must do to be saved. He pointed them to Christ, and with affectionate earnestness, urged them immediately to repent and believe the gospel. The next day, in visiting from house to house, he found others under deep religious impressions. The seriousness soon spread through the place, and the subject of religion became the engrossing topic of conversation. In the course of one or two weeks from this time, several were found rejoicing in hope. He was exceedingly anxious lest they should take up with a false and spurious hope. He warned them of the danger of self-deception, reminded them of the deceitfulness of the human heart, and pointed out the various ways in which persons are liable to deceive themselves. He also exhibited with great plainness the distinguishing marks of genuine conversion. The work became powerful, and increased with rapidity, and in the course of a few weeks, a large number gave pleasing evidence of having passed from death unto life.

After about two months, he left the place. He did this, partly, because the people began to take measures to give him a call to settle with them as their pastor. Having devoted himself to a missionary life, he was determined to listen to no such call. Another reason which induced him to leave, was, the presumption that the work after having made such progress, might be expected to continue, as well without his labors, as with them. In this respect, he committed an error, as he was afterwards convinced. In the early part of his ministry, he thought that he might accomplish the most good by laboring only a short time in a place—that when a revival had commenced, he might safely commit it to the care of others, and retire to a new field. But experience taught him that this was not the way to be most useful. He found it

important to prolong his labors, when God was rendering them effectual to the salvation of souls.

After he left South Salem, he preached a few Sabbaths in Danbury, a town in the western part of Connecticut. Here a work of grace immediately commenced, and several interesting cases of conversion occurred. Here, too, the people began to adopt measures to obtain him for their pastor, which induced him to leave sooner than he otherwise would have done. He afterwards expressed his regret that he did not remain longer in Danbury, as there was every appearance of the commencement of a great and glorious revival. The work made but little progress after his departure.

From Danbury, he went to Monroe. Here, also, success attended his labors. To what extent, I am not able to state—nor have I been able to learn how long he labored in this place. It was, however, but a short time. He preached there occasionally, afterwards, and often spoke with interest of the young converts, and particularly of one, whose triumphant death he was called to witness.

In the spring of 1813, he visited North Lyme, a parish near the mouth of the Connecticut river. The church was destitute of a pastor. There was no special seriousness when he commenced his labors. But a deep solemnity soon pervaded the congregation, and in three or four weeks, a large number were anxiously enquiring what they must do to be saved. He remained in this place longer than in any of the places in which he had previously resided; and "much people," in the judgment of charity, were "added unto the Lord."

While in North Lyme, he spent considerable time in assisting the Rev. Mr. Vail, pastor of the church in Hadlyme Here too, his labors were greatly blessed to the quickening of God's people, and to the awakening and conversion of sinners.

In the summer of 1813, he preached four Sabbaths in Bloomfield. In this place, as in others, the Spirit of God

accompanied his labors, and several interesting cases of hopeful conversion occurred.

In the autumn of 1813, he commenced his labors in Milton, a parish in the west part of the town of Litchfield. This was a waste place. The people were not only without a pastor, but had become so weakened by divisions, and by the loss of their parish fund, that they almost despaired of ever enjoying again, the privilege of a preached gospel. Dr. Beecher, who was at that time pastor of the church in Litchfield, and another neighboring minister, agreed to solicit funds in their respective congregations, to support a preacher, for a season, in Milton. Having entered into this arrangement, they made application to Mr. Nettleton. In the mean time, the churches in the vicinity were requested to remember that people particularly in their prayers. In conformity with the arrangement, Mr. Nettleton came, and called on Dr. Beecher. It was the first time that they had met. "Thou hast well done," said Dr. Beecher, "that thou art come." "I ask,"said Mr. Nettleton, "for what intent ye have sent for me?" "To hear all things that are commanded thee of God," said Dr. Beecher. On Friday, by the direction of Dr. Beecher, Mr. Nettleton took lodgings at the house of one of the members of his church, who lived on the borders of Milton. The next day, notice was sent to the people that they might expect preaching on the Sabbath. This was entirely unexpected by the people, as they were ignorant of the efforts which had been made in their behalf. On Sabbath morning, Mr. Nettleton repaired to the place, and preached to a very small congregation. There were but few professors of religion in the place, and they were in a lukewarm state, and very great indifference to the subject of religion prevailed among the people at large. At the close of public worship, one of the people, very reluctantly, as he afterwards confessed, invited Mr. Nettleton to his house, because there was no other individual who was disposed to do it. In this house, he found a

pleasant home; and it proved to be like the house of Obededom, which God blessed. Salvation came indeed to this house, and the family were much more unwilling to part with their guest, than they had been to receive him.

The curiosity of the people was soon excited, and they flocked together to hear the stranger who had come so unexpectedly among them. At the close of one of his evening meetings, he informed them, that he had been requested to come and labor with them for a season, and he wished them to pray for a revival of religion, adding, "whether you do or not, it is possible there may be one, for christians in other places have agreed to pray for you." This produced great solemnity. Several went from that meeting in deep distress. It was soon manifest, that God was in the place, of a truth. The work increased rapidly and became very powerful. It was characterized by remarkably clear and distressing convictions of sin. The subjects had a vivid sense of the opposition of their hearts to God, and in some instances, their distress was overwhelming. On one evening, two or three individuals were in such horror of mind, that it became necessary to remove them from the meeting, to a neighboring house. This, for the moment, created some confusion, but order was soon restored, when Mr. N. addressed the people in the following manner. "It may, perhaps, be new to some of you, that there should be such distress for sin. But there was great distress on the day of Pentecost, when thousands were pricked in the heart, and cried out, 'men and brethren, what shall we do.' Some of you may, perhaps, be ready to say, if this is religion, we wish to have nothing to do with it. My friends, this is not religion. Religion does not cause its subjects to feel and act thus. These individuals are thus distressed, not because they have religion, but because they have no religion, and have found it out. It was so on the day of Pentecost. The thousands who were pricked in their heart, had found that they had no religion, and were unprepared to

meet their God. They had made the discovery that they were lost sinners, and that their souls were in jeopardy every hour." These may not be the precise words, but such was the substance of his address. It produced a salutary effect. It served to check what would be the natural result of mere sympathy on such an occasion, and also to stop the mouths of those who might be disposed to cavil. I would here remark, that in most of the revivals under Mr. Nettleton's preaching, there were cases of overwhelming distress. But this distress was not the result of mere sympathy, but of clear conviction of sin; and in almost all cases, it soon terminated in a peaceful and joyful hope of salvation.

Mr. Nettleton labored in Milton three or four months, during which time a large number became hopefully subjects of renewing grace. The wastes of Zion were repaired. The things which were ready to die, were strengthened, and there was great joy in that place.

It has been mentioned that Dr. Beecher and another neighboring minister, agreed to collect funds for the support of Mr. N. while preaching in Milton. Some money was collected for this purpose, but he refused to receive it. The people had made him some presents in clothing, and with this he was satisfied. "Having food and raiment," he was "therewith content."*

While he was at Milton, some young people from South Farms, (a parish in the south part of Litchfield,) attended his meetings, and were awakened by his preaching. This prepared the way for him to visit that place, which he did in the latter part of the winter. He continued there, laboring with great success, for several months.

* It may be proper here to remark, that during the ten years that Mr. N. was laboring in revivals, he received as a compensation for his services, barely sufficient to defray his expenses. When he was taken sick in 1822, he was found to be entirely destitute, and money was collected by his friends in different places, to defray the expenses of his sickness.

An account of this revival was written by James Morris, Esq., an intelligent and pious gentleman, who resided in that place, and who for many years sustained a high reputation as a teacher of youth. The account was never published, but the manuscript has been carefully preserved, and has been kindly submitted to my inspection. The narrative is very particular. It gives the names and age of eighty individuals, the time of each one's hopeful conversion, and some account of the religious exercises of almost all of them.

A few extracts will be interesting to the reader.

"The revival of religion began in South Farms in February or March, 1814. Praised be God for his glorious work of redeeming love in the ingathering of his elect. The following persons are hopefully brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light, and are made heirs of God and joint heirs of Jesus Christ, the dear Redeemer. How astonishing is the work of the Divine Spirit, the Sanctifier and Comforter, in bringing God's chosen from the bondage of sin and Satan, and prostrating them at the foot of the cross. Some have been called from among the most dissipated, thoughtless and gay; and from seventy years of age, down to school children. Some from the haunts of sensuality, profaneness and intemperance, now apparently sing with understanding the songs of redeeming love.

The first was A —— S ——, a young female eighteen years of age. She had her first impressions in Milton in the month of January or February. She continued in a state of anxious inquiry until the last of February, when she entertained a hope that she had met with a change of heart. She professes to enjoy religion. This was the first instance of awakening in this place."

"R —— H ——, aged nineteen years, after a conflict of serious impressions and opposition of heart, for about six weeks, was, apparently, on the 20th of April, renewed in heart. The first evangelical exercise that she had any know-

ledge of, according to her own acconnt, was benevolence to her fellow men. She would that all men might be saved, even if she was lost. The divine law appeared to her holy, just and good. She felt submissive to the divine will—a disposition to resign herself into the hands of God, feeling that the judge of all the earth would do right. She thus continued till Friday, the 22d, when returning from a religious meeting, she felt a love to God on account of the excellency of his character. She loved holiness for holiness' sake. She then hated sin, because in its own nature, it is odious. This was the first time that she had those consolations that the world cannot give nor take away. Here she dates her hope, and rejoices in God her Saviour."

"B —— C ——, aged 20 years, having had frequent chidings of conscience at times for more than a year past, hopes that on the 14th of April she was born of the Spirit, and that she is now reconciled to God. Christ appears to her altogether lovely, and the chiefest among ten thousand. Her first gracious exercises appeared to be, love to the brethren, love to God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. She hates sin because it is exceeding sinful. She appears to have clear views of her own native depravity, and of the obstinacy of her will. She wonders at and adores the patience and long-suffering of God, that she had not been long ago consigned to everlasting despair."

"N —— L ——, aged 14 years, after sundry weeks of opposition of heart to all moral good, and hating the truth, and avoiding all good people, was made to yield up her willful perverseness of heart to God, and to submit to the terms of the gospel. The first exercise of her mind was that of love to all good people."

"R —— C ——, aged 20, having experienced distressing convictions of sin, with an uncommon load on her heart, and with a high sense of the malignant nature of sin, experienced, as she believed, divine consolations, on the evening of the

15th of April. It was while returning home from a conference, that the burden of sin was removed, as she hoped, and the love of God was shed abroad in her soul. She retired to her chamber, and took her Bible, and opened it at the 103d Psalm, and read, '*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, &c.*' She poured out her soul to God, in gratitude and praise. She perseveres in her grateful remembrance of the goodness of God, and hopes that she shall live to his honor and glory the remainder of her life."

"J —— S ——, aged 37 years, was naturally a passionate man. He lived in open sin and profaneness, from his youth. He hated to read the Bible, and to attend meeting on the Sabbath. He hated to hear religious conversation, and avoided religious instruction. He was of an independent spirit, and impiously heaven-daring. Yet the religious instruction he had received from his mother, could not be wholly effaced from his memory. He often had chidings of conscience, and was often filled with remorse; but to drive all this from his mind, he would throw himself into vain, sensual and dissipated company. He never offered a prayer in his family. His mouth was often filled with profane oaths, and the most impious imprecations on himself. His torments of mind increasing upon him, he resolved to put an end to his dreadfully profane and wicked life. He accordingly procured a large dose of arsenic, and laid it up for that purpose. In the mean time, he had a dreadful struggle in his mind. His purpose, he thought, must be put in execution, and it seemed to him that the torments of a future world for sin, could not exceed the pain of mind which he felt. In this dreadful struggle, the pride of his heart was subdued, and he was made to bow at the footstool of sovereign grace on the 10th day of March. Traits of humility, self-abasement, and abhorrence of sin, in no man appear more conspicuous. He admires, and adores, that such

an awful, heaven-daring, and heaven-despising wretch, should be plucked as a brand out of the fire. He is altogether submissive, and his life is a life of prayer."

"L —— O —— W ——, aged 12 years, on the 10th day of May was hopefully delivered from the thraldom of sin and satan. She experienced a singular conflict and conviction of sin for about a week. Her distress was seemingly too great to be long endured. Her cry was, 'Oh, what a dreadful hard heart.' 'Oh, it seems as if I was in hell.' Her conflict wore upon her bodily frame like a violent attack of fever. In this youth it was clearly manifested, that when the Holy Ghost, the comforter, is come, he will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. A person who had experienced a change of heart, and who had seen this child through all her trials and conflicts, would be led to conclude that the change in her is a real one. She possessed less guile than those of maturer years. There was no dissembling. And when grace was planted in her soul, she did not seem to know it. The first effect that it produced, was a calm serenity of mind. She did not know why she felt so. She continued so for some hours, not knowing but her dreadful distress would return upon her. She took her Bible and perused it, which the day before she perfectly hated, because looking into it increased her torments. This calm serenity appeared in the morning when she arose. She thus continued till towards noon, when she informed me that she loved God—that the Bible was a new book to her—that she loved to read it—that the world did not appear to her as it did before—that *all* was new. She took me by the hand, and said, she loved me, and loved all God's creatures because God made them. She said she knew that she was a great sinner. She wondered how she could so willfully oppose God so long. God was right and reasonable, and she was altogether wrong in being so stubborn and perverse. She said she was willing to submit herself into the hands of God, for God would do right with her. She

knew that it would be just if God should send her to hell Here, submission seemed to be her first evangelical exercise, and then, love to the brethren."

"Widow A—— C——, aged 50, fixes on the 3rd day of May as the time when she hopes that her heart was renewed by the spirit of grace. She had long before entertained a hope, founded on her good works. She had never before believed in total depravity. She believed that to live uprightly, and deal fairly and honestly with mankind, was sufficient to entitle her to salvation. But at this time, she found that her former hopes were nothing, and that her righteousness was but filthy rags. She now feels that all her hope is in Christ. She is full in her belief of all the great doctrines of grace. She places her confidence in God through Christ, relying on the promises."

"Widow S—— H——, aged 70 years, after having lived to the common age of man, without the fear of God before her eyes, was at this period of life, hopefully brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light. She was of French descent, and came into this State at the age of 12 years. She never was taught to read or write. She married at the age of 20 years, a man of the world, a stranger to common morality. She is the mother of four children, who grew up without any religious instruction. But this aged woman now gives evidence of a change of heart, even at the last part of the eleventh hour. She appears to rejoice exceedingly in the wonderful display of God's benevolence in the ingathering of his elect. Her last days appear to be emphatically her best days, and her last comforts, the sweetest comforts of her life."

"F—— E ——, aged 20 years, after quarreling with the doctrines of grace, and having heart-risings against the divine sovereignty and the doctrine of God's electing grace, hopes, that sometime in the latter part of June, his stubborn heart was subdued. He still continues resigned and submissive,

and appears to enjoy the consolations of religion. But he rejoices with fear and trembling, lest his heart should deceive him."

"S—— W——, aged 26 years, hopes that he is reconciled to God and his law. His heart has been much opposed to the great doctrines of grace; but now, he says, things appear right and reasonable. These views of divine things, have happened to him since the revival commenced, in March, but he cannot tell the time, when the change took place. But he can say, 'whereas I was once blind, now I see.'"

"J—— B——, son of E—— B——, aged nearly 13 years. On the last Sabbath in May, or the first Sabbath in June, his mother went to meeting, and charged him and her other child to be good children, and not to play, but read their books. His father went to a distant field to see about his cattle. Before noon, this ——— was smitten with deep conviction of sin. He continued in a distressed state about 24 hours, without food or sleep. His mind seemed to be overwhelmed with a sense of the dreadful nature of sin, as committed against God. Something happened to him at the end of 24 hours, which caused him to wipe away his tears, to wash himself, and cheerfully to partake of some food. It is now about two months since this happened. He has been, from that time to this, remarkably calm and serene in his mind. He answers questions rationally—says that he loves God and hates sin. He fails not of his daily devotions and reading the Bible, and has altogether a change of deportment. He appears to have a sense of the evil nature of sin. The duties of the Sabbath and the sanctuary, appear to be his delight. It is apparent to all who know this youth, that a great change has taken place in him. From being passionate, petulant, perverse, and stubborn, he is now humble, meek, patient, forbearing, and forgiving."

These few instances, taken from many similar to them, recorded in this narrative, will serve to give the reader some

idea of the character, not only of this revival, but of the revivals generally, thirty years ago. The subjects of this revival so far as I have been able to learn, with few exceptions, continued to adorn the christian profession.

Sometime in the spring of 1814, Mr. Nettleton left South Farms, and repaired to North Killingworth, greatly exhausted by his labors, and intending to rest for a season. At this time the people of Chester, a neighboring parish, were destitute of a minister; their pastor, the Rev. Mr. Mills, having died a short time before. It being known in Chester, that Mr. Nettleton was at home, application was made to him to attend a funeral in that place. He at first declined, assigning as the reason, that he was greatly exhausted by his labors and needed rest. The man who came after him, as he turned to go away, burst into tears. This so affected Mr. Nettleton, that he concluded to go. He attended the funeral, and at the close of it, he gave notice that he would meet the young people in the evening, at the house of their late pastor. A large number assembled, and the meeting was very solemn. Such were the indications of the special presence of God among the people, that he was induced, notwithstanding the state of his health, to continue with them a considerable time, and had the satisfaction to witness a very interesting work of divine grace.

In the autumn of 1814, Mr. Nettleton commenced his labors in East Granby. This was a waste place. The moral condition of the people was exceedingly deplorable. But God saw fit to turn again the captivity of Zion. Under Mr. Nettleton's preaching, there was a very interesting revival of religion. He preached here till some time in the winter, when he was obliged to suspend his labors for several months, by hemorrhage from the lungs. The Rev. J. B. Clark, the present pastor of the church in East Granby, in a letter dated Nov. 17, 1843, thus speaks of the effects of Mr. Nettleton's labors in that place.

"Most of these who were connected with the church, as the result of that revival, have worn remarkably well, so far as is or can be known. Many of them have been, and are still, bright and shining lights in the church of Christ. One of the subjects, Miss C. Thrall, died as a missionary among the western Indians.

"The effect of that revival upon the church, and upon the community, was most happy and lasting.

"The interest of Christ's kingdom had suffered much from an erroneous ministry. The church lost all spirituality and fervency. The community were buried in sinful indifference. When Mr. Nettleton came among them, stupidity and slothfulness prevailed among all classes and all ages. The effect of his entrance to the place, was electric. The schoolhouse, and private rooms, were filled with trembling worshipers. A solemnity and seriousness pervaded the community, which had not been experienced for years before. There was no bustle—no *array* of means. All was orderly, quiet, and scriptural. There seems to have been an *increasing* solemnity, while the work continued.

"I am told that his sermons were in a high degree, practical. Doctrinal sermons were frequent, but these had a practical turn. They were eminently scriptural, and plain, and made men feel that *they* were the men addressed, and not their neighbors. He sometimes preached on the severer doctrines with great power and apparent good effect. At this day we can hardly imagine the effect which his visit had upon this waste place. This seems to have been Satan's chief seat. Infidelity had been infused into the very bosom of the church. Of course sin in every form abounded.

"There were no spiritual hymn-books in use, till Mr. Nettleton labored here; and then those hymns, in his hands, became most solemn sermons.

Mr. Nettleton is remembered with much interest, and peculiar affection by most of those advanced in life. When I

have been speaking of him in my pastoral visits, the most in tense interest is excited. From many expressions used as the old people speak of him, one may know that his labors are still remembered with affection."

Early in the spring of 1815, Mr. Nettleton having so far recovered from his illness as to be able to preach, labored for a season in Bolton, with signal success. Here the people gave him a call to settle as their pastor, which he immediately declined, and recommended to them his friend and classmate, the Rev. Philander Parmele. Mr. Parmele was installed Nov. 8, 1815.

From Bolton, he went to Manchester, to assist the Rev. Mr. Cook, whose people were enjoying a time of "refreshing from the presence of the Lord." By a divine blessing on his labors, the work was greatly promoted and extended.

After this, he spent a few weeks in Granby, (west parish,) where his preaching was crowned with very signal suecess. Peculiar circumstances prevented him from continuing long with this people; but there is reason to believe that many souls were savingly benefited by his labors. There were but few places in which he labored, where so much apparent good was effected in so short a time.

Of the revivals mentioned in this chapter, excepting the one in South Britain, no account was published at the time; and with the exception of that and the one in South Farms, so far as is now known, no particular account was ever written. As Mr. Nettleton kept no journal of his labors at that period, it is impossible at this late day, to give any more than a very general account of most of these revivals. Some of the facts which I have mentioned, fell under my own observation, and some of them were obtained in private conversation from Mr. Nettleton himself.

CHAPTER V.

His labors in New Haven, Salisbury, Bridgewater, Torrington, Waterbury, Upper Middletown, Rocky Hill, Ashford, Eastford and Bolton.

In the spring of 1815, at the request of the pastors of the Congregational churches in New Haven, Mr. Nettleton repaired to that city. Soon after his arrival, he was invited to visit the school of young ladies, taught by the Rev. Mr. Herrick. He gave them some account of the revivals in Litchfield county, and particularly, of the revival in Mrs. Pierce's school in Litchfield. Many of the scholars were deeply affected by this account, and in the course of a few days a large proportion of the members of the school, were anxiously enquiring what they must do to be saved. The seriousness spread, and a great and glorious work of divine grace was witnessed in the city, and to some extent in Yale College. Mr. Nettleton continued to labor in New Haven two or three months to the great satisfaction of his brethren there, and with the same success which had crowned his labors in country parishes.

In the summer of 1815, he visited Salisbury, a town in the north part of Litchfield county. In this town was one of the most remarkable revivals which ever occurred under his preaching. No account of it was ever published. In a letter written by him in 1827, to the Rev. John Frost, there is the following brief notice of it.

"In 1815, in the town of Salisbury, Conn., after laboring awhile under great discouragement, there were some favorable appearances. A number were anxious, and a few in

awful distress of soul, in one village. It was taken hold of by some ignorant, officious hands; and they were set to groaning and screaming, and alarmed all the village in my absence. Having heard the tidings, I hastened to the spot, and with kind, but decided severity called them to order. My attempts, by those who had given the work that turn, were considered as very obtrusive and daring. It was reported all over town, that a revival had begun in Salisbury, and that I had put a stop to it. They seemed to be very much grieved and shocked at my conduct. It took a number of days to restore order, but when it was done, the work of God advanced silently and powerfully, until all classes, old and young, were moved all over town. The language was, 'the fountains of the great deep are broken up.' Not far from three hundred were numbered as the hopeful subjects of divine grace in that revival."

The Rev. Jonathan Lee, who is a native of Salisbury, and who at present resides there, has furnished the following brief account of this revival.

"The first and greatest revival of religion which has taken place in Salisbury, Conn., stood connected with the labors of Mr. Nettleton, and began in the summer of 1815, and extended through the autumn and winter following. The church was destitute of a pastor, and reduced to a small number, there being but seventeen male members. Having been unsuccessful in their efforts to obtain a pastor, and seeing no accessions, the few members remaining, felt a deep conviction of the necessity of the effusions of the Spirit, to strengthen the things that were ready to die; and an unusual spirit of prayer was felt, as they sought the blessing at the throne of grace. In these circumstances, they applied to Mr. Nettleton to come and labor among them. After they had waited with doubt and solicitude for sometime, he at length came, without previously having sent any promise, or notice; and, as was ascertained, without informing the friends with whom he had been, what was his place of destination. He arrived at the house of one

of the deacons of the church and lodged. He made such inquiries, as were designed to ascertain whether his coming had been much looked for and relied upon, in order to a revival of religion. For some cause his fears were excited, perhaps from the fact, that deacon S. had that day been riding in unsuccessful pursuit of him; and he at once declined staying or making any effort, saying, 'I can do no good here.' Endeavors were made to convince him, that he had not been the object of reliance, and to persuade him to stay till the following Sabbath, and preach and take opportunity to get acquainted with the state of christian feeling. Yielding for the present to the importunity, he prayed and conversed with the family, the laborers being called in for the purpose from the field, and offered to meet at the same place, at a particular hour, on the next day, any young people, who, when invited by the deacon, should be disposed to come in. He next visited the other deacon and pursued the same course and at his second visit, met with a company of young persons at each place. He began talking to them in the most simple and solemn manner, with the view to fix upon their minds some plain important truth, suited to awaken and impress the conscience. There was no dilation of thought but one weighty idea, such as the worth of the soul, or the necessity of true religion, dwelt upon and reiterated, and left in its naked reality and solemnity on each individual's mind. This noiseless commencement of his labors, was followed by visiting the families of christian professors, and by stated religious meetings in connection with the labors of the Sabbath. A primary object was to find the state of feeling in christians, and to promote a humble, praying spirit. At an early date, after being convinced of his duty to stay and labor, he called together the church, and with great earnestness, besought them to lay aside all expectations from him, and pray with humility and fervency, that the work of the Lord might be revived. At the same time, he gave such counsels and cautions, particularly with

regard to the instruction and treatment of persons under conviction, as he judged necessary to guard against unhappy results.

"This favored servant of Christ, came with no trumpet sounded before him, but in the meekness of his master, and the Lord was with him in very deed. Meetings became crowded and deeply solemn, and many obtained hope in Christ He conversed individually with the anxious, and met at certain times at his boarding place, all who were disposed to be conversed with, on the state of the heart, and the salvation of the soul. In addressing meetings, he was wont to seize on some point of interest, bearing directly upon the state of mind in which his hearers were, and then press it with a rare degree of directness, plainness and force.

"Without attempting further details, I feel assured, (though absent, and closely occupied in a revival among the people of my charge,) that this revival was distinguished for its stillness and solemnity, for deep conviction of conscience, for discriminating views of divine truth, for humility and subsequent stability of christian character. The subjects were of different ages, but generally youth. As fruits of the revival about two hundred were admitted into the Congregational church, besides several who united with other churches. Many of these young professors intermarried, and became heads of families, and have lived to train up many children for Christ. Not a few, in the twenty-seven years since elapsed, have died in the Lord. Those remaining, still constitute the strength of the church; for although some other favored seasons of ingathering have been enjoyed, none have borne comparison with this, for permanent influence upon the state of the community, for enlightened piety, and steadfastness of christian principle and character. Many still look back to that date with the deepest interest, and liveliest gratitude, as the blest period of their espousal to Christ—as the memorable year of the right hand of the Lord. The name of Asahel Nettleton, the humble,

skillful laborer in this field, at that season, employed in directing so many to Christ, is embalmed in many a heart. It stands associated with their dearest hopes, and purest joys, and will call forth praises never ending to the chief shepherd, who employed him in leading so many of this flock into his spiritual fold, to stand at his right hand at the great decisive day, to the praise of his own unfathomable grace."

I will add a few facts, which were learned directly from Mr. Nettleton.

In the commencement of this revival, much opposition was manifested on the part of the enemies of religion. But God overruled it to the furtherance of the gospel. As the people assembled one evening at a large school-house in which they had been accustomed to meet, it was found that all the seats had been removed from the house and concealed. A large congregation having assembled in and around the house, Mr. Nettleton observed to them, that he had believed that the Spirit of God was operating on the minds of the people, and that he was now confirmed in the belief. The people then repaired to the meeting-house, where the religious services were conducted with most evident tokens of the divine presence. The work, though still, was very deep and powerful, and it spread into every part of the town. It at first prevailed mostly among the youth, but it soon began to appear among heads of families, and some who were quite advanced in life, were numbered among the subjects. The conversion of a man from fifty to sixty years of age, who had been a violent opposer, seemed to be the means of arresting the attention of many. This individual was a man of considerable influence, and like Paul, before his conversion, was exceedingly mad against the church. But God, as there is reason to believe, subdued his heart, and he became as ardent in his attachment to the cause of Christ, as he had been violent in his opposition. "What a glorious work of grace is this in Salisbury," said he one morning, to Mr. Nettleton; "I hope that all my family, and all the people

of the town will become interested in it, even if I am cast off forever." This was the first manifestation of a change in his feelings. The change in him was so striking, that many who had been skeptical were convinced that it must be the work of God. He took every opportunity to converse with his acquaintance, and to recommend to them the religion, which he had formerly despised, and God made him the instrument in awakening many to a sense of their lost condition as sinners.

The interest became so intense in every part of the town, that whenever Mr. Nettleton was seen to enter a house, almost the whole neighborhood would immediately assemble to hear from his lips the word of life. Husbandmen would leave their fields, mechanics their shops, and females their domestic concerns, to inquire the way to eternal life. Religion was the great and all-absorbing theme in almost all companies, and on almost all occasions. Mr. Nettleton labored in Salisbury through the winter.

In the spring of 1816, he commenced his labors in Bridgewater. This is a parish in the town of New Milford, in the south-western part of Litchfield county. Here was a small church destitute of a pastor. The state of religion was very low. Unhappy dissensions existed in the church, and great stupidity prevailed among the people at large. Soon after he commenced his labors, there seemed to be a solemn attention to the word preached, but no cases of deep conviction of sin. He soon became convinced that there could be but little hope of a revival of religion, until a better state of feeling prevailed in the church. He endeavored to impress upon the minds of the brethren, the importance of settling their difficulties, and of uniting their prayers and their efforts for the promotion of Christ's kingdom. But his exhortations seemed to have but little effect, and perceiving that they had no proper sense of their dependence on God, but were placing undue reliance on him, he thought it best to withdraw. Accordingly, without the knowledge of any but the family in which he boarded, he

suddenly left the place. The next day was the annual State Fast. The people assembled, expecting to hear him preach; when to their astonishment, they found the pulpit vacant. The disappointment was great, but it produced the intended effect. The members of the church were deeply affected. They spent the day in prayer and mutual confession of sin. All their difficulties were healed, and brotherly love was restored. It was with them a day of deep repentance and humiliation before God. Numbers of the youth, whose minds had been somewhat impressed by Mr. Nettleton's preaching, when they found that he had left them, were brought into great distress of mind. Meanwhile he was spending the day, with a brother in the ministry in a neighboring town. On the Saturday following, he proposed to this brother, to go and spend the Sabbath in Bridgewater, and permit him to supply his pulpit. The arrangement was accordingly made. This brother found a most interesting state of things. A deep solemnity pervaded the congregation, and quite a number were found anxiously inquiring what they must do to be saved. When Mr. Nettleton learned the state of things, he returned to Bridgewater, and labored there with great success for several months.

In this revival there was one case of peculiar interest. Mr. C. was a most violent opposer of religion. He had not been seen in the house of God for many years. He went one evening to hear Mr. Nettleton in a school-house, but being ashamed to be seen, he stopped at the door. While standing in this situation, an arrow from the Almighty's quiver pierced his heart. He went away with a troubled spirit. He was convinced that he was a sinner, and exposed to the wrath of heaven. But he resisted the conviction, and endeavored to banish the subject from his mind. It was however impossible. The thought was impressed upon his mind, as he afterwards confessed, "You must repent—you must pray, or you will perish." His heart replied, "*I* pray!—no, never. I'll

perish first." Thus he struggled till his distress became intolerable. He was one night in such horror of mind, that it seemed to him that he could not live till morning. The scene was awfully solemn. To see this bold blasphemer, bewailing his sinfulness and crying for mercy, in distress and anguish which seemed too great for human nature to sustain, was a most affecting sight. The next day he obtained peace, and seemed to be in a new world. This man became a preacher of righteousness to his former associates. On the next Sabbath morning he was seen on the steps of the church conversing with deep interest on the subject of religion, and recommending to his fellow sinners that Saviour, whom he had found so precious to his soul. Such was the change in this individual, that it extorted the confession from the mouths of gainsayers, that it must be the finger of God. He could say with truth,

"Great is the work, my neighbors cried,
And owned thy power divine,
Great is the work, my heart replied,
And be the glory thine."

This striking display of divine grace was made instrumental of promoting and extending the work.

Since the publication of the first edition of this work, the following facts have been communicated by the Rev. Fosdic Harrison, of Bethlem, who was, at the time, pastor of the church in Roxbury, a town adjoining Bridgewater.

"In the spring of 1816, when Mr. Nettleton was laboring at Bridgewater, he was frequently at my house. On one occasion, having been with me a day or two, I was expecting his assistance at an evening meeting; but a short time before the hour of meeting, he manifested his intention to return to Bridgewater. I urged him to stay and attend the meeting, but he still declined. We went together from the study into Mrs. Harrison's room. She was then in feeble health. On learning his determination to leave, she most earnestly entreated

him to remain. Among other things she said, 'Do stay, Mr. Nettleton, I am unable to attend the meeting myself, but if you will stay, I will pray for you all the time.' We went out together, and he left, but her earnest entreaties went with him, and troubled him. Soon after this, he heard she was dangerously ill. He came directly over and said, 'Brother, learning that you was in deep affliction, I have come to pray with you. We retired and bowed down together before God. Some of his earnest petitions I still remember, commencing thus—'Oh, Lord Jesus, she, whom thou lovest, is sick.' Soon after this, he came to attend her funeral. He remembered his refusal to yield to her importunate solicitations to attend the meeting; and that he might comply with her entreaties as far as he then could, he requested that a meeting might be appointed for that evening at the house where she died. While the other brethren went from the funeral to a monthly meeting of ministers in New Milford, and urged him to go with them, he remained and attended the meeting in Roxbury. The last conversation he had with Mrs. Harrison, the solicitude she manifested in the spiritual welfare of the people, her promise to pray for him and them, were the theme of his discourse. He reminded the people that her prayers for them were ended. His appeals were powerful. Impressions were made, which, I trust, resulted in the saving conversion of some souls. He remained with me a day or two, and his counsels and prayers were truly refreshing."

In the summer of 1816, Mr. Nettleton spent some time in Torrington, assisting the Rev. Mr. Gillet. There was some special seriousness among the people, previous to his arrival: but it greatly increased afterwards. He remained in Torrington about three months. His labors were highly appreciated by the pastor and members of the church, and were manifestly attended by a divine blessing. The Rev. John A. McKinstry, present pastor of the church, in a letter dated June 12, 1844, says, "How long the revival continued, I cannot

definitely state. At the communion in November, the first fruits were gathered into the church; and in the January following, several more were added. The number that joined at these seasons, was about fifty. Others were added at subsequent seasons, but the precise number I cannot state. It is reported, however, by those acquainted, that the number of hopeful conversions was about seventy.

"In regard to the revival, I may say, it extended through the parish, and was quite powerful. Even at this period, when first impressions have gone, the revival of 1816 is called *the revival in Torrington*, there having been none since of equal extent and power. The subjects of that work, with few exceptions, have adorned their profession, and some of them have been, and still are, pillars in the church. The influence of this revival upon the church, and upon the community, was in a high degree salutary.

"The work was solemn, and the truths presented plain and searching. The true character and condition of the sinner was clearly set before him, and he was shown that his only hope was in the sovereign mercy of God through a crucified Saviour.

"The measures adopted, were such as were common in this region at that time; such as the ministry of the word on the Sabbath—frequent visitation, connected with personal conversation on the subject of religion; and more or less prayer meetings during the week. In personal conversation, Mr. Nettleton is said to have abounded, and many attributed their religious impressions to the truth presented at such times."

From Torrington Mr. Nettleton went to Waterbury, a town in the north part of New Haven county. Here a revival had already commenced. There is an account of this revival in the second volume of the Religious Intelligencer, from which I make the following extract.

"Towards the close of the summer (1816) it was the will

of God that our pastor should be laid on a bed of sickness, and for some time, little hopes were entertained of his recovery He was however spared, and his health so far restored, as to enable him to commence preaching towards the close of the succeeding winter; and though still feeble, we enjoyed his labors with some interruption, till sometime in June following, when he was obliged to desist, from returning and increasing debility.

"Thus it pleased the Great Head of the church, to deprive us of the services of our teacher, at a time when, to human appearance, they seemed to be most needed. In the mean time, whatever impressions were made by former meetings, or whatever serious effects might be expected to arise from the heavy judgments with which we, as a people had been visited,* they appeared to be lost upon us.

"Vice, immorality and irreligion, appeared to gain additional strength, and the cloud that overshadowed us in a moral point of view, appeared fraught with tenfold darkness.

"But in the midst of all these scenes of discouragement, this day of trouble, rebuke and blasphemy, God's children did not despair. They stayed themselves on the God of Jacob; and while waiting for an answer to their prayers, knew that he had also said, 'fear not little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'

"He was about to appear to build up the waste places of Zion, and in such a way as to convince us, that the work was His, and that the glory alone was due to him. He hath said, 'mine honor is mine own, and my glory I will not give to another.' 'I will work, and who shall let it?'

"In the month of February, a small society of young ladies commenced a weekly meeting for the purpose of reading the scriptures and religious conversation, and one or two soon became hopefully pious.

* A mortal sickness in the spring and summer of 1815.

"On the 7th of April, 1816, our hearts were cheered by seeing four young persons come out from the world, unite with the church, own Christ before men, and covenant to walk with him in newness of spirit.

"About the forepart of May, one general spirit of zeal appeared to actuate a great proportion of the church. The spirit of grace and supplication appeared to be poured upon them. A concert of prayer for the revival of God's work in this place was agreed on, in which all the members were to be engaged in secret between the hours of eight and nine o'clock on Saturday evening. The monthly prayer meetings for the success of missions, began to be more generally attended, and became more deeply interesting.

"A serious and solemn attention on the Sabbath, now appeared to pervade the whole assembly; and though sometimes deprived of the regular administration of the word, our meetings were interesting and instructive.

Sometime in the latter part of June, it had been stated to the writer of this, that a Mr. ——, (who had formerly been an open opposer of vital religion,) and some few others, had manifested a desire to commence a weekly meeting for religious conversation and prayer. He accordingly called on one or two of the persons named, and a meeting consisting of four only was held on Sabbath evening.

"In this meeting, the person alluded to above, declared what God had done for his soul—mourned over his past conduct, and expressed his determination to devote himself to the service of God in future.

"The meeting was opened and closed with prayer. A stated meeting was agreed on. The next evening, about twelve attended. Information began now to get abroad, and on the third evening about sixty were present. On the fourth evening, so great was the crowd that attended, they could not all be accommodated, though the house was large and conve-

nient; and it became necessary after this, to hold them at the meeting house.

"This, I think, may be fairly stated as the first visible commencement of the work.

"Numbers now appeared to be under deep conviction in almost every part of the society. The Rev. Mr. Beecher, of Litchfield, and the Rev. Mr. Nettleton, (at that time preaching at Torrington,) were present on the next Lord's day; and at a meeting appointed for the purpose on Monday morning, a considerable number appeared to ask the all-important question, 'what must I do to be saved?' Mr. Nettleton was with some difficulty prevailed upon to come and assist us in our then destitute situation, and returned here on the Saturday following.

"From this time his labors became incessant, and his diligence unwearied. When not attending a public conference, the house was generally thronged by numbers who were anxiously inquiring the way to Zion, and to whom he was ever ready to impart instruction.

"Our worthy pastor, though unable to attend on public duties, had the cheering prospect of seeing the work of the Lord prospering among the people of his charge, and the fields ripening for a rich harvest of souls to be gathered into Christ's spiritual kingdom. The work had now become very extensive and powerful; and one remarkable characteristic feature was, it seemed to attack and subdue the very champions of infidelity the first, and to operate in such a way as to silence the most daring opposers.

"In some instances, one or two of a family seemed to be taken, and the others left. But in many, almost whole families, (or at least, all who had arrived at years of discretion,) were under deep conviction, and have since subscribed with their own right hands to be the Lord's, and surnamed themselves by the God of Jacob."

This work, in its general features, has been similar to what

has been in other places. It has embraced all the variety of operations, from the still small voice, to the most powerful threatenings of a broken law, and the vindictive justice of a justly offended God; and has embraced all ages, from youth to grey hairs; though of the youth and middle aged, by far the greatest number have been brought to see their need of an interest in Christ, and led to embrace him as their only Saviour.

"In the month of August, some of the first fruits of the revival, (together with some few who had entertained a hope before,) were gathered into the church. On this occasion, seventeen were added; nine more in the month of October; and on the first Sabbath in February, 1817, seventy-one publicly professed their faith in Christ, and took the vows of God upon them; and seventeen received the ordinance of baptism. Twenty-one have united themselves with the church at different times since, making one hundred and eighteen since the first of August, 1816; about one hundred and ten of whom may be considered as fruits of the revival. Many more remain yet to be gathered in; and so far as the writer of this has been able to discover, no instance of apostacy has yet appeared.*

"The doctrines taught are those considered as the grand leading truths of the gospel, viz.: the strict spirituality of the moral law—the total depravity of the natural heart—its enmity to God—the necessity of regeneration by the spirit of his grace—an entire dependence on the merits of Jesus Christ for justification, pardon and acceptance—our obligations to own him before men, and to manifest our faith in him by a holy walk and conversation—the divine sovereignty—the electing love of God—and the final perseverance of the saints, as the only ground of the sinner's hope, and the anchor of the christian's soul."

* This account was written in July, 1817.

Mr. Nettleton continued his labors in Waterbury, amid scenes of thrilling interest, for several months.

After he left Waterbury, he spent some time in Bolton, taking care of his friend, the Rev. Mr. Parmele, who was laboring under mental derangement, and supplying his pulpit.

In the fall of 1817, he was requested to preach at Upper Middletown, for the Rev. Mr. Williams who was sick. There was no special seriousness in this place. On the contrary great spiritual apathy prevailed. The youth were exceedingly thoughtless, and addicted to vain amusements. Soon after he commenced his labors here, he became acquainted with a very intelligent young lady, who had long been seriously inclined, and who was thought by many to be truly pious. She handed him Marshall on sanctification, and said, "if I dared believe that book, I should think I was a christian." "I am glad," said Mr. Nettleton, "you dare not believe it." These words went to her heart. She immediately became exceedingly anxious, and was soon brought to rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

After he had preached in this place two or three Sabbaths, there were some cases of special seriousness; but understanding that the young people had appointed a ball on the day after the annual Thanksgiving, he expressed the purpose of leaving the place. The young people, hearing of his purpose, concluded to give up their ball, and sent a committee to invite him to preach to them on that evening. He very readily accepted the invitation. The meeting was appointed in the Academy. A large congregation of youth assembled. Some came from other towns. This meeting was one of thrilling interest. Some who had been previously awakened were brought to rejoice in hope, and great numbers were brought under deep and powerful conviction. God made the word "quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, the joints and the marrow." The scenes of that evening will be remem-

bered by not a few, while immortality endures. Several in deep distress followed Mr. Nettleton to his lodgings. He prayed with them, and with great difficulty persuaded them to retire to their homes. Many spent the night in crying for mercy, and several found peace before morning. From this time, the work became very powerful. Meetings of inquiry were held at the house of the pastor, but the place became too strait, and God provided one of greater convenience. A man who owned a large ball-room, and who had been a bitter enemy to religion, was awakened and hopefully brought to repentance. He opened his ball-room for meetings of inquiry.

Mr. Nettleton labored in this place a number of months, and was made instrumental, as there is reason to believe, of the conversion of many souls.

The Rev. Zebulon Crocker, the present pastor of the church, in a letter dated December 15th, 1843, speaking of the converts in this revival, says:

"Among the males who are members of this church, there are several who have borne the burden and heat of the day, and borne it well. They have been pillars in the temple of our God, and are so still. There are others who have gone from us and united with churches abroad, whose names appear connected with the public charities of the day, and who are known to be bright and shining lights in the world. Similar remarks apply to the female members. Several have died in the faith. As a whole, I think I have evidence on which to affirm, that they have run well, and have received a good report." Speaking of the results of that revival, he says:

"In the fall of 1817, the church was in a 'cold state' as some have expressed it. Religion, I am inclined to think, was at a low ebb. The blessed work of the Spirit which immediately succeeded, it is to me evident, changed very much the aspect of affairs for the better, as a permanent result. It gave moral courage and strength to the church. Some who had become members without piety, were hopefully converted.

Faith in regard to the efficacy of the gospel, was encouraged. Christians desired a renewal of the work, and were prepared to labor and pray for another season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The way was prepared for the more frequent revivals with which the church has been blessed."

During the revival in Upper Middletown, a few individuals from Rocky Hill, an adjoining parish, attended some of Mr. Nettleton's meetings, and became anxious for their souls. The seriousness spread, and at the earnest solicitation of the pastor, the Rev. Dr. Chapin, Mr. Nettleton visited that place. He arrived on Saturday, April 4th, 1818.

"When he arrived," says Dr. Chapin, "there was a meeting in the house of the pastor. At the same place, in the evening, there was another—which brother Nettleton attended. His acquaintance with the state of the public mind among us, began that evening. From that time, during the greater part of several months, he was indefatigable, laboring in season, and out of season, to the full extent of his health and strength. In connection with impressions and experience realized in 1818, eighty-four persons became members of Christ's visible church. How many of them were brought to this performance of external duty by brother Nettleton's labors, we shall know hereafter. How many of their names, or whether all, will be found written in the Lamb's Book of Life, we shall see at the opening of that perfect book. During the almost twenty-six years that have fled, since the delightful and interesting events above mentioned, it appears that twenty-five of the eighty-four have gone the way of all the earth. Their departure was either while resident here, or in some distant location. Fifteen also of the same fourscore and four, have removed from us, and so far as we know, are yet living. So far as man can judge, those eighty-four have adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour, in a manner equal, at least, to the fruits of those other revivals, which Christ has permitted us to enjoy.

"In an important sense, brother Nettleton's talent was *one*. In the cultivation and improvement of that *one*, he was unwearied. By the concentration of study, always directed to the most useful point, which is practical piety, that talent had risen to the first order. Hence the depth and exactness of his knowledge in true experience, and the things which are essential to salvation. Hence too, the quickness of discernment relative to the specific instruction, and the manner of imparting instruction, that every mind needed with which he came in contact.

"He had a quick and precise perception of the sources whence objectors and cavilers draw their difficulties. In replies, showing the true answer, and the only remedy, he was ready, appropriate, generally silencing, and not rarely convincing.

"In the whole of his intercourse, he was exemplary. He was remarkably cautious of appearances. He would not expose himself or his cause to reproach, by giving so much as the least occasion for the surmises of evil. If Satan's followers attempted the propagation of injurious reports, they were obliged to go far away from us for their foundation. The rumors thus procured, and put in motion, always, if investigated, proved to be false, and infernally malicious. Even the subtile vigilance of the evil Spirit, could find, in his conduct here, no foundation for its eagerly coveted slanders."

In October, 1818, Mr. Nettleton commenced preaching in Ashford, a town in the eastern part of Connecticut. His labors soon began to be crowned with success. In his journal under date of Nov. 4, he mentions "One rejoicing." Nov. 6, "Five or six rejoicing." Nov. 8, "Very full. Such a Sabbath is rarely seen." The work now became powerful, and made rapid progress. Mr. Nettleton labored in Ashford without intermission about two months, and preached there occasionally afterwards. Of the results of his labors, the reader will be able to form some opinion from the following

extract of a letter from the Rev. Charles Hyde, the present pastor of the church, dated May 30th, 1844.

"With respect to our departed brother's labors in this place, I know but little, except what I learn from the records of the church, and the recollections of some who were then living here. That he was remarkably wise, fervent, skillful, and successful, all bear testimony; and all, especially those who were brought into the kingdom through his labors, cherish a most affectionate and grateful remembrance of him. His influence here was permanently good. It is felt at the present day. He commenced his labors here, in Oct., 1818. The first additions to the church were in March, when fifty-six were received. In May following, twelve, and in July ten, and in November four; making in all eighty-two, of whom, I suppose, the greater part, if not all, were subjects of that revival. This is a very large number for so small a society.

"Of the character of these converts, I cannot speak particularly, except of those who are now here. Twenty-two have died. Twenty-seven have removed from the place. Three only have been excommunicated. The remainder, are, with hardly an exception, now consistent members—some of them pillars in the Church. Many of those who have left us, I am informed, continue to adorn their profession. Upon the whole, I think it must be admitted that the revival here under Dr. Nettleton's labors, was a remarkably pure one; and happy is the church that receives such a blessing. Its influence goes down to succeeding generations."

In the month of December, 1818, Mr. Nettleton commenced his labors in Eastford. Here was a small church, destitute of a pastor, and in a very depressed condition. The influence of their last minister, who became a universalist, was very disastrous to the cause of religion. He had been dismissed about four years, when Mr. Nettleton visited the place.

"During this interval," says their present pastor, the Rev. Francis Williams, "they were supplied some part of the time

by such preachers as they could obtain; some part of the time, the deacons conducted meetings on the Sabbath, and a considerable portion of the time, they had no public worship.

"During this state of things, the interests of religion greatly declined, and the light of the church was well nigh extinguished. According to the most correct information which I can obtain, there were but about twenty members in the church, and only six male members. Most of these were persons advanced in life. At this critical period, Mr. Nettleton came among the people. A powerful work of grace immediately commenced, such as neither they, nor their fathers had seen. He preached the distinguishing doctrines of grace so pointedly, that persons have often informed me, they felt themselves in the hands and at the disposal of God. They felt that if they were ever saved from their dreadful depravity and wretchedness, it must be by sovereign grace. He made practical application of these doctrines to the heart and conscience in such a plain and forcible manner, that they felt that if they were lost, they should be without excuse.

"The work was characterized by such stillness and power, that every one felt that the finger of God was in it. To repeat a remark made by an observer at the time, 'it was so evidently the work of God that not a dog dared move his tongue.' I am not able to ascertain the number who indulged hope. I find by the church records that forty-eight united with the church by profession, March 28th, 1819, and in June following eleven more, making in all, fifty-nine by profession. Several were also added by letter. This in the then existing state of the church, was life from the dead. The church was soon after supplied with a faithful pastor, who labored here for more than twenty years; and the church has been on the whole, prosperous.

"Of those admitted to the church as fruits of this revival, fifteen have left this world, while the rest continue unto this present. Most of them have given pleasing evidence of piety.

No one acquainted with the facts, can doubt that the cause of Christ was greatly promoted by the labors of Mr. Nettleton. And perhaps so few evils seldom follow a great revival in any place.

"You ask, how is Mr. Nettleton regarded by the good people in Eastford? They look up to him with the most ardent affection as a spiritual father. This may be ascertained by any one who will mention his name in their hearing. He will see indisputable proof of affectionate regard."

In the month of April, 1819, Mr. Nettleton went to Bolton, where he remained two or three months, laboring with his friend, the Rev. Mr. Parmele. It appears from an account published by Mr. Parmele, in the Religious Intelligencer for November, 1820, that sometime previous to Mr. Nettleton's arrival, there had been an unusual spirit of prayer among the people of God. But God saw fit to try their faith.

"While," says Mr. Parmele, "christians were thus daily wrestling in prayer, for the salvation of sinners, and were committing the cause of religion into the hands of God, their faith and patience were brought to the test. Satan, as though aware that his kingdom was soon to receive an attack, rallied his forces, and marshaled his bands to make resistance. Iniquity rushed in like a flood. The youth who, we expected, would be awakened, if our prayers were answered, were generally never more dissolute. Their minds were supremely occupied with scenes of mirth and parties of pleasure. If they received any impressions on the Sabbath, or at a religious meeting during the week, they were soon banished through the influence of worldly companions and vain amusements.

"To counteract the influence of these things, in the month of April (about the time Mr. Nettleton commenced his labors n Bolton,) meetings were appointed for religious conversation with the youth, which were generally well attended, and soon became interesting. At one of these meetings,

eight or ten of the youth were alarmed with a sense of their sins. Their convictions deepened, until they became overwhelming; and within a few days they were brought to rejoice in hope. This spread conviction like an electric shock, through the society of young people, until it was evident that the Lord had appeared in his glory to build up Zion. The volatile youth could no longer resist the influences of the Holy Spirit; but in deep solemnity, were daily inquiring what they should do to be saved. Vain amusements were entirely suspended. Scenes of pleasure were forsaken; and the trifles of time were lost in the awful concerns of eternity. No object could divert the anxious mind from inquiring the way to life.

"The convictions of the subjects of this work, were deep, increased rapidly, and were of short continuance. Unconditional submission was urged, as the only ground of acceptance with God. And as soon as this was exercised, in most instances, the sinner was filled with joy. One expressed herself thus, 'I attempted to pray for mercy, while in my sins, but my conscience flashed conviction in my face. What! will such a sinner as you attempt to pray! You are so vile, your prayers will not be heard. I then felt the reasonableness of my condemnation so forcibly, that I took up on the side of justice, and pleaded the cause of God against myself. In this condition, I soon found relief.'

"May and June, with us, were interesting months. Most of the subjects of this revival, became reconciled to God, during this period. On the first Sabbath in July, thirty-five united with the church, nine of whom received the ordinance of baptism. This was a day so interesting, that the solemn scenes which transpired can never be forgotten. The youth, the middle aged, and the aged, composed this number. On the first Sabbath in September, twenty-one united with the church, and two have been added since, making in the whole, fifty-nine. Five living in families not connected with my

society, have united with the Baptist church. The subjects of this revival are of all ages, from twelve years old, to upwards of sixty; but by far the greater portion are youth.

"We would express our gratitude to those brethren in the ministry, who occasionally preached for us, during this revival; and especially to Mr. Nettleton, whose labors were signally blessed. We trust the Lord will reward them for their labors of love. But we desire to look beyond all instruments, to the great first cause, and as a church and people, to express our unfeigned gratitude to the Father of all mercies, for this work of his grace. *This is the Lord's work, and it is marvelous in our eyes;* and to his great name be ascribed the *kingdom, the power, and the glory forever.*"

CHAPTER VI.

Labors in Saratoga county and Nassau.

In July, 1819, being very much exhausted by his labors in Connecticut, Mr. Nettleton repaired to Saratoga Springs for rest. He did not expect to preach in that region, as his sole object was to recruit his strength. After he had been there a short time, the Rev. Mr. Tucker, of Stillwater, (now the Rev. Dr. Tucker, of Providence, R. I.,) called to see him. In the course of their conversation, something was said respecting waste places. This led Mr. Tucker to give him some account of Malta, a town in that vicinity, which had long been a waste place, and in which there was no Presbyterian or Congregational church. This account awakened in Mr. Nettleton a desire to visit that place. Mr. Tucker kindly offered to accompany him, and introduce him to a Mr. Hunter, a professor of religion, and a very respectable and worthy man. They spent a night at his house, and attended a prayer meeting with a few neighbors who were invited in. Mr. Nettleton agreed to come again and pass a Sabbath with them, and accordingly, on the first day of August, 1819, he preached in their meeting house to a congregation of about fifty souls.

On Monday, he returned to Saratoga, and at the request of the Rev. Mr. Griswold, attended the monthly concert in the evening. He shortly after, attended some other meetings, when it became apparent that the Spirit of God was operating upon the minds of the people. Mr. Nettleton confined his

labors principally to Saratoga, occasionally preaching at Malta, till November. He then labored most of the time in Malta, occasionally preaching in the neighboring towns, until the beginning of March, when he went to Schenectady, where he continued till near the close of April. The revival which began at Saratoga, spread into Malta, and thence into all the surrounding region, and into Union College.

While Mr. Nettleton was at Schenectady, he wrote to a friend in Connecticut, and an extract of the letter was published in the fourth volume of the Religious Intelligencer, which I here insert.

"I can at present, give you nothing more than the outlines of what the Lord is doing for this section of his church. This region, and especially the county of Saratoga, has heretofore been as destitute of revivals of religion, as any part of this State. The commencement of this work was at Saratoga Springs last summer. At that place, about forty have made a profession of religion. These include some of the most respectable characters in the village. Directly south, is the town of Malta. For a number of years, there has been no Presbyterian church in that place. But the year past, there has been a very interesting revival among that people. Our meetings have been crowded, and solemn as the house of death. A church has been recently organized, which now consists of one hundred and five members. You can hardly imagine the interest which this revival excited in the surrounding region. Although the inhabitants are scattered over a large extent, yet I verily believe, I have seen more than fourteen hundred people assembled at once, to hear the gospel. On the east of Malta, is the town of Stillwater. Here, also, there has been a very powerful revival. Although there has been some excitement to serious things in this place in years past, yet this revival exceeds any they have ever before witnessed. On the 27th of February last, one hundred and three publicly presented themselves a living sacrifice unto the

Lord; and about one hundred more are rejoicing in hope, and expect soon to follow their example. The work is still advancing; numbers are under conviction. In Ballston, adjoining Malta on the west, the work has been very powerful. At their two last communions, they admitted one hundred and eighteen as the fruit of this revival, and the work is yet increasing. Directly north is the town of Milton. I visited that people Sabbath before last, and preached three times to a crowded and solemn assembly. In this place, a revival has just commenced. Twelve are rejoicing in hope, and a number more are anxious for their souls. Eight miles to the northwest, adjoining Milton, is the town of Galway. Here the work is overwhelming. In less than two months past more than one hundred and fifty have been brought to rejoice in hope. Dr. Nott, from this college, visited them last Sabbath, and admitted ninety-five to the church, and the work is still progressing. On the south of this, is Amsterdam. Here fifty have recently been led to rejoice in hope. Adjoining this, is a place called Tripe's Hill. Here thirty are rejoicing, and the work in both these places is increasing. South from Malta, about twelve miles, is the city of Schenectady, and Union College, where I now reside with Dr. McAuley. He takes a lively interest in this good work. I first became acquainted with him last summer at the Springs, and more particularly at Malta, where he frequently visited us, and preached, and conversed, and attended the meetings appointed for those anxious for their souls. On a Sabbath, when a number were to be admitted to the church in Malta, he brought with him a number of students from the college. Some of them became anxious. About this time, one of the students was called into the eternal world. He was laid out in Dr. McAuley's study. The Dr. was anxious to improve this solemn providence to the best advantage. He assembled the students around the lifeless remains of their departed friend, and conversed and prayed with them in the most solemn man-

ner. A number of them engaged to attend to the subject of religion in earnest. From that time, many of the students became deeply impressed with a sense of their lost condition. For them were appointed meetings of inquiry. And in this very room where they lately beheld the breathless corpse of their young companion, and where I am now writing, was witnessed a scene of deep and awful distress. About thirty of the students are brought to rejoice in hope. The revival is now very powerful in the city. Such a scene they never before witnessed. More than one hundred have been brought to rejoice in hope. Besides these, we had more than two hundred in our meeting of inquiry, anxious for their souls. We met in a large upper room called the Masonic Hall. The room was so crowded, that we were obliged to request all who had recently found relief, to retire below, and spend their time in prayer for those above. This evening will never be forgotten. The scene is beyond description. Did you ever witness two hundred sinners, with one accord in one place, weeping for their sins. Until you have seen this, you can have no adequate conceptions of the solemn scene. I felt as though I was standing on the verge of the eternal world; while the floor under my feet was shaken by the trembling of anxious souls in view of a judgment to come. The solemnity was still heightened, when every knee was bent at the throne of grace, and the intervening silence of the voice of prayer, was interrupted only by the sighs and sobs of anxious souls. I have no time to relate interesting particulars. I only add, that some of the most stout, hard-hearted, heaven-daring rebels have been in the most awful distress. Within a circle whose diameter would be twenty-four miles, not less than eight hundred souls have been hopefully born into the kingdom of Christ, since last September. The same glorious work is fast spreading into other towns and congregations. "*This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.*"

The above letter was dated Union College, April 28th, 1820.

In the same volume of the Religious Intelligencer, there is a letter from a student in Union College, dated March 6th, 1820, giving a very similar account of this revival, except that it had made greater progress at the date of Mr. Nettleton s letter. I quote one short paragraph from this letter, to show the character of the revival in Malta. After having given some account of the revival at Saratoga Springs, the writer says—" It commenced then in Malta, about ten miles from this place, under the labors of a Mr. Nettleton, a missionary from Connecticut. It commenced, I said in Malta; and with such displays of the power of God's Spirit in crushing the opposition of the natural heart to every thing holy, as are very seldom seen. The *Deist* and *Universalist*, the *Drunkard*, the *Gambler*, and the *Swearer*, were alike made the subjects of this heart-breaking work. Four months ago, Christ had no church there. It was a place of great spiritual dearth—and like the top of Gilboa had never been wet by rain or dew. But the Lord has now converted that wilderness into a fruitful field. They have an organized church of eighty-five members, and the work of conviction is going on."

This revival, which commenced at Saratoga Springs, and spread into the surrounding region, resulted in the hopeful conversion of not less than two thousand souls.

In the month of April, 1820, Mr. Nettleton commenced his labors in Nassau, a village a few miles east of Albany. Among his papers, has been found the following sketch of the revival in this place. Had he kept a similar journal of his labors in all the places in which he preached, it would have contained a vast amount of interesting intelligence. But this is the only thing of the kind to be found among his papers. It is here given as presenting a specimen of the revivals which occurred under his preaching.

"A sketch of a revival of religion in Nassau, which commenced April, 1820.

"The state of religion in this village and its vicinity, has for years been deplorable. The village contains a house for public worship, held in common by two denominations, the Dutch Reformed and the Presbyterians. The former, during the winter past, have had one sermon every other Sabbath, and the latter have had no settled minister, and no regular preaching for years. Indeed, their little church had become nearly extinct. The revival of religion in this place commenced as follows:

"In the month of February, a number of persons from this village visited Malta, during the revival there. One of this number was left at Malta, became a hopeful subject of divine grace, and shortly after returned to this village. The sacred flame began to kindle in the hearts of a few old professors. The news of distant revivals began to excite inquiry, and some few sinners became more solemn. One, after a season of distress, became joyful. For a moment, hope was cherished, that a glorious day had dawned; but the surrounding darkness prevailed, and hope at length expired. For a few weeks, I had been absent from Malta. On my return, I received repeated and pressing invitations to visit Nassau. Prompted by this state of things, instead of returning to Schenectady, as was expected, I concluded to defer it for one week, and visit Nassau.

"April 19. Arrived at Nassau. Attended a meeting in the school-house. About fifty assembled, and nothing particular occurred.

"April 20. This evening attended a meeting in a large dining hall in a public house. The room was crowded. A number stood around the doors and windows, and listened with respectful silence and much solemnity. It afterwards appeared that not less than twelve or fifteen dated their first serious impressions from that meeting. A Mr. P—— subse-

quently observed, 'I went to that meeting full of prejudice. You began to tell me the feelings of my heart, and I began to be vexed and angry at one or two of my neighbors for informing you what I had said. I thought you was a man of great brass. On returning from meeting, I asked Mrs. P—— how she liked it? She burst into tears, and we both wept.'

"Another whose mind was impressed at this meeting, was a young woman who had passed through a revival in the town of Salisbury, Conn., five years before. She had been somewhat anxious and lost her concern, and as I have since learned, had made light of the subject. She entered the room this evening in company with others, without suspecting that the preacher was a man whom she had ever seen before. She remarked afterwards, 'as soon as I saw the preacher, I felt distressed. I observed it was the same man that preached in Salisbury. I was expecting a revival. From this time her former feelings returned; and in addition, she was overwhelmed with a sense of her guilt in having dropped the subject.

"April 21. This evening met those that were anxious, at Dr. M——'s. About thirty were present. As I commenced speaking to them in general, all were very still and solemn. Suddenly a youth sitting near the window, as if pricked in the heart, cried out in distress. This produced no diversion of attention, but increased the solemnity; for the cause was perfectly understood. After conversing with each one, we bowed the knee together at the throne of grace, and then in solemn stillness retired at an early hour. A number of these anxious souls belonged to one family. They reached home weeping. The father of the family had retired to rest. As the carriage came up to the door, he heard the cry of distress, and started from his bed to learn the cause. His daughter-in-law, on entering the house, threw her arms around his neck and exclaimed, 'My father, what shall I do? what shall I do?' She

continued for some time in great distress, but before morning, was rejoicing in hope.

"April 22. Saturday—Was in some doubt what course to pursue, as the meeting house on the next Sabbath was engaged. Rode to Greenbush, and negotiated an exchange with the Rev. Mr. Marselus of the Dutch Reformed Church.

"April 23. Sabbath—Mr. Marselus preached at Nassau with power and effect, and at the close of the services, at my request, read a letter from Dr. McAuley, containing an account of the revival in Union College and Schenectady. This increased the solemnity. I preached at Greenbush in the forenoon, and at 3 o'clock, P. M., preached again in a ball-room at a public house, on the road about two miles from this village. When I arrived, I found the ball-room crowded to overflowing. At the close of the services, a number assembled around me. Some from curiosity, but many in deep distress, weeping aloud. I requested them to suppress their cries, and be as still as possible. At this meeting a number were awakened. This evening, preached in the meeting-house in this village for the first time, to a crowded and solemn audience.

"April 24. This evening met about sixty in a meeting for anxious inquirers. Among them were many in deep distress. This I expected would be my last meeting in this place. But I found so many in distress for their souls, and the number increasing, that I announced the appointment of one public meeting more in the meeting-house, on the following evening.

"April 25. Met in the meeting-house. More crowded than ever, and solemn as eternity. Preached on the *nature* and *reasonableness* of gospel repentance, and urged the duty of immediate compliance, and the danger of delay. Never more expecting to meet my anxious hearers in this world, I urged them by all the solemnities of the judgment, not to pass the threshold of the meeting-house that night, with impenitent hearts. They seemed to hear as for their lives. One from deep distress, found relief in the midst of the discourse, and

lifted up a joyful countenance. No sooner had I closed and stepped from the stage, than she came near, and taking her husband by the hand, urged him to come to Christ. It was like a two edged sword. It pierced him to the heart. At this moment the anxious ones assembled around me, and took me some by the hand, some by the arm, and some by the coat, exclaiming, 'Don't leave us. What shall I do? What shall I do?' Nearly the whole congregation tarried. Those who could not come near, stood, some on the seats, and some on the sides of the pews, to hear and see. From the midst of this scene of distress, I addressed the whole congregation for about five minutes. Among other things I said,

"My hearers, I now no longer hesitate to tell you what I have hitherto been afraid to speak, that a revival of religion is begun in Nassau. Yes, from what I have seen, I can no longer doubt the fact. I believe you are about to witness a solemn and trying time in this place; and now you must prepare either to be taken or to be left. I then told them, I would meet them in the morning at sunrise, in the school-house, and pray with them before I left, if they chose. I advised them to depart as still as possible, and to be retired through the night.

"April 26. Met them in the morning before sunrise. Two of those who went away in distress last night, came to me rejoicing this morning. They found relief before they slept. I prayed and conversed with them a few moments, and started for Schenectady before breakfast. Heard of one more rejoicing this morning. I called and found it so, and found others in distress. The distress in one house led me to another, and that to another, until I visited nine families before I left the place. It was truly affecting to witness these strangers crying for mercy. In this state I left them, and went to Schenectady. During my absence, I felt a deep interest for them in Nassau. The scenes that I had there witnessed, were continually before me. It rained, and I tarried two nights.

"April 28. Started from Schenectady for Nassau. Arrived at Mr. B ——'s within three miles of the village, late in the evening. In this house, some whom I had left in great distress met me with joyful countenances. Here I was informed that the Baptists had a meeting at the meeting-house this evening. Wishing to embrace the opportunity to make an appointment, I drove on to the meeting-house, and found the house nearly full. All were standing, and about to retire, as the meeting had just closed. I made my way through the crowd, as I suppose, unobserved, stepped upon the stage, and announced an appointment for the next Sabbath. The effect of this little circumstance, was almost incredible. I could hardly say which was most prominent, the burst of joy or of grief. A number came to me with joyful countenances, while others were borne down with grief. It is this night just one week since the first instance of hopeful conversion occurred, and now about thirty appear to be subjects of grace. Many of these, it was afterwards found, obtained relief on the day, and some a few moments after I left them. This was a memorable day. For when they afterwards came together to give a relation of their christian experience, we found that some on that day retired into the groves and fields, and some into their chambers and closets, to cry for mercy. I have since thought that the effect of my leaving them as I did, *in the advanced stages of their conviction*, was evidently beneficial. It drove them from all human dependence. Distressing as it is, and cruel as it may seem, it is necessary for them to feel that no arm but God's can help them. Similar effects from like circumstances, have heretofore been witnessed.

"April 30. Sabbath—The congregation was crowded and solemn. This day an event took place, unknown to me at the time, which was designed by the enemy to check and put a stop to the work, but which in the hand of God was made subservient to its advancement.

"May 1. Met about eighty-five in the meeting of inquiry.

"May 2. This evening held a meeting in the meeting-house, and took up the *common* sayings of christians, which are calculated to check a revival by lessening the sinner's sense of obligation, and quieting him in his sins.

"May 4. At this date, we find about forty rejoicing in hope From this date to the 14th, preached nine times, and held one meeting for inquirers.

"May 15. This evening attended a meeting of inquiry, and found the number and distress of anxious souls, rapidly increasing. The distress of W. is greatly augmented. This is the person who had been a little anxious during the revival in Salisbury, and whose attention had again been excited, on entering our meeting the second evening in this village. From this time, her distress continued about three days and nights. Providentially she was in a family a number of whom were thoughtless and far from religion. This was loud preaching. So great was her distress, that she was unable to attend meetings, and was confined to the house. Many called to witness her distress. She had concluded that the day of grace was over; and she was now past the fear of mortals. She continued crying, '*Lord have mercy on my soul. I am lost—Oh, forever lost.*' In this situation, she sent for me to call and see her, that she might beg my pardon for what she had said, before she died. I called, and such was her agitation, that it was difficult to keep her in one position. Sometimes sitting and then kneeling, in a piteous tone she would cry out, '*young people, take warning from me! young people, take warning from me!*' The house was constantly visited by curious spectators, often till late at night. Many thought that she could not live long. One physician asked my opinion, whether I thought she would die. From past facts, I have noticed that this *extreme* distress does not generally continue long, especially in seasons of revival—sometimes but a few moments—*commonly* a few hours, and rarely over three days. And when this extreme distress exceeds this time, I begin to fear that it

may subside, as it has sometimes done without a change of heart. On the third day, she was rejoicing in hope.

"The question is often asked, why is it that the convictions of some sinners are so much greater than those of others? I answer, I do not know. The sinner's distress does not always appear to be in exact proportion to his crimes. But one thing I have learned from observation, and that is, that when persons of a particular description have been brought under conviction, they have been exercised with severe distress. Those who have once been anxious for their souls, and have been laughed out of it, and returned to the thoughtless world, if again awakened, are more distressed than ever. Those who once made it a business to retire and pray, and have long since dropped the subject, are usually, if their attention is again excited, greatly distressed. Those who have labored hard to stifle and throw off their convictions, or those who have formerly resisted the strivings of God's Spirit, are usually the subjects of keen distress, if convinced of sin, a second time. Those who have scoffed at the subject of religion, and have mocked the messengers of Christ, and ridiculed the worship of God, are usually filled with great consternation and agony, when brought to a just sense of their character and state. Those who have made light of revivals of religion, by calling them enthusiasm, fanaticism, and the work of the devil—especially those who have taken an active part in ridiculing the conviction and conversion of sinners, in the season of a revival—those who have called revivals by the hardest names, who have expressed the greatest contempt of them, and who have done the most to bring them into disrepute—persons of this description, have been the most frightful monuments of distress, that I have ever witnessed. They despair of ever becoming the subjects of that work which they have treated with so much contempt. We have sometimes heard the champion of infidelity expressing his horror for fear of having committed the

unpardonable sin. I am acquainted with the names of persons, who have become perfectly deranged in consequence of *their own opposition* to the progress of revivals. Conscience, without any other accuser, has driven the enemy of revivals out of his reason into a state of settled delirium. The confession and fate of Judas, show the power of conscience, and stand recorded as a warning to the opposers of religion to beware.

"May 17. This evening we met in the school house. The room was crowded, and the meeting was exceedingly joyful. Every word that was spoken, seemed to find a place in some heart. Such a season of rejoicing is rarely witnessed. '*Old things are passed away, and all things are become new.*' It is not yet quite one month since the work commenced, and about sixty are supposed to be the subjects of grace.

"May 19. This evening we met in a private house, and at the close of the exercises, one of the young converts spoke to a stout-hearted sinner who had been struggling against his conscience, and he dropped upon his knees in distress of soul. Another followed me nearly home, inquiring *what he must do to be saved!* In this situation, I left him; but before we retired to rest, he came in with a new song in his mouth. The other went home in great distress, but found relief before morning.

"May 20. This was a solemn day throughout this village. Mr. L., a young lawyer, who had been anxious for a few days, and who had retired to rest in my chamber, came to my bedside early this morning in distress. He sat down to breakfast with us, and while at the table, heard the tidings that another of his mates had found the Saviour the last night. He instantly left the table and retired to my chamber. Sometime after, I entered the chamber and found him prostrate on the floor, crying for mercy. While he thus continued, waxing worse and worse, a number came up to see him; but he

seemed to take no notice of them, and continued pleading for mercy. About 10 o'clock, A. M., whether with a new heart, I cannot say, I only record the fact, he came down stairs, expressing his joy that he had found the Saviour. At the same time, his fellow student M., in a house a few rods distant, lay prostrate in his chamber. I called and found a number assembled around him, while he lay crying for mercy. The burden of his prayer was, that God would pardon his self-righteousness. The fact was this. A few days previous, he and his brother lawyer, had shut themselves in a chamber, seeking, and striving and praying together for a long time, thinking without doubt, they should ere long succeed in becoming christians. Here they continued, until both had become exceedingly self-righteous. They could see it in each other, and each was alarmed at it, and asked my opinion if they had not better separate. By all means, I told them. This sight of his heart was doubtless what most distressed him. About three o'clock P. M., he arose in like manner, rejoicing that he had found the Saviour.

May 21. Sabbath—Held a meeting at a public house, (Mr. B's,) four or five miles from this village. When I arrived, the rooms were filled—doors and windows thronged. Those who seemed the most anxious, had placed themselves near the seat of the speaker. When I named the psalm, all was silence, except the sighs and sobs of anxious souls. The moment I began to speak, I felt that God was there. I addressed them from Gen. vii. 1. '*Come thou and all thy house into the Ark.*' I felt unusual freedom and satisfaction in speaking. The solemnity of the scene will long be remembered. When I had pronounced the benediction, I know not that a foot moved. All were standing, and still anxious to hear. I gave them an account of what I had witnessed up in the village the week past. Many had assembled from the surrounding regions of desolation, doubtless from motives of curiosity, having heard something of the wonderful movement

in the village. While giving a relation of these wonderful things, every ear was attentive. Some were sighing, and some were gazing in wild amazement. The language of every look seemed to be, *we never heard such things before.* In one large room which was crowded entirely full, nearly all were in deep distress, besides many crowding round the doors and windows, all apparently equally anxious, except here and there a joyful convert. They were crowded so closely together, that I could not pass among them to converse. So I spoke to one and another here and there at a distance, as I could catch their eyes as they lifted them streaming with tears. All were utter strangers whom I addressed, and not a name could I call. My only method of designation was, by pointing and saying, I mean you, and you, or this sinner, and that sinner. Never did I feel a deeper compassion for sinners, than for these poor strangers. A number, I know not how many, were awakened this day.

"Preached in the village in the afternoon and evening. At this time, we concluded that the crisis of solemnity was past in the village.

"May 22. This evening attended the meeting for inquirers, and all things considered, it was the most distressing and painful scene hitherto witnessed in this revival. Unexpectedly, a number who had never before attended, came from the region of solemnity above described. Some came four or five miles, and crowded the meeting, and threw it into a scene of awful distress. The distress was so great, and the suppressed sighs and sobs became so loud, that I could scarcely hear my own voice. One or two found relief on the spot; and some lost their strength, so that we were obliged to help them out of the chamber. It was with the utmost difficulty that I could prevail on them to separate. Some would start to retire, but the cry of distress would call them back again, and in this state, we were long detained. After leaving the chamber, the distress was so great, it was almost impossible

to prevail on them to retire. At length, all retired but one, who in great agony, tarried through the night. But many who came from a distance, remained over night in the neighborhood.

"May 24. This evening attended a meeting at Mr. G's A number sobbed and wept.

"May 25. This evening met again at the same place. One who formerly thought he had obtained a hope and lost it, was again awakened, and at the close of the meeting cried aloud. He professes to have found relief, but I think without any good evidence of a change of heart. I fear he has again deceived himself.

"May 26. This evening met the young converts in a social meeting, and began to hear a relation of their christian experience.

"May 27. This afternoon held a general meeting of the young converts, and of all others who chose to attend; the object of which was, to address the subjects of this work on the nature of a public profession of religion. Spoke of the duty—the qualifications requisite—and stated and answered objections. The duty; 1. To God. 2. To yourself. 3. To the church. 4. To the world, &c.

"May 28. Sabbath. Preached thrice to a crowded, attentive, solemn and yet joyful audience.

"May 29. This evening met nearly 200 in a meeting for inquirers. This meeting was anticipated by many with secret dread. Some christians, doubtless, among the rest, who were present and witnessed the scene of distress at the last inquiry meeting were heard to say, that they dreaded to attend this evening. They could hardly endure the thought of passing through such a scene of distress a second time. And I can truly say, that for the first time, I felt the same reluctance. But to the astonishment of all, instead of an anxious, we had a joyful meeting. Most of those in such distress at our last meeting for inquirers, had found relief, and were exceeding

joyful. What an astonishing change in one week! I felt that it could hardly be possible. We had lost our anxiety, and had little else to do, but to render united thanks to God for what he had done. But before we parted, I went round and collected into a circle, a number who were without hope, conversed with each one, addressed the whole and prayed with and for them, as those professing no hope. This was evidently the means of deepening their impressions.

"May 30. This evening met in the school house. The room was crowded, and the audience were still, solemn, animated and joyful. The same was the general character of our meetings after this date.

"From this time, we spent a number of half days and evenings in hearing a relation of their christian experience, preparatory to a public profession. These were interesting and animating seasons, affording the best opportunity of learning the human heart in all its foldings of depravity and opposition; and the astonishing change wrought by the power of God's grace.

"June 25. Sabbath—This day sixty-eight made a public profession of religion, thirty-two of whom were baptized. At this time, more than a hundred had, to appearance, become the subjects of divine grace. A number more have since, publicly professed Christ; and of these, five young men are preparing for the gospel ministry."

This sketch was drawn up by Mr. Nettleton, a few months after he left Nassau, from brief memoranda which he kept at the time. This, as I have said, is a specimen of the revivals which occurred under his preaching. In not less than forty or fifty places there were revivals in connection with his labors, quite as interesting as this; and in some of them, the hopeful converts were twice or thrice as numerous.

While I speak of this as a specimen of the effects of Mr. Nettleton's preaching, I ought, perhaps, to make one or two slight exceptions. When he first went to Nassau, he expect-

ed to remain there but a short time. This circumstance induced him to hold meetings more frequently than he did in ordinary cases; and as he was obliged to close his labors there in about two months from the time the revival began, and as the church was destitute of a pastor, he admitted some of the converts to the church, sooner than he was wont to do. With these slight exceptions, the foregoing sketch will give the reader a very good view of his ordinary course of proceeding, and of the effects which accompanied his labors.

CHAPTER VII.

Labors in New Haven, North Killingworth, North Madison, Wethersfield, Newington, and Farmington.

In the summer of 1820, there was some unusual seriousness in New Haven, and in Yale College; and at the earnest solicitation of the pastors, Mr. Nettleton again visited that city. He arrived August 5, and as appears from his journal, continued his labors there, with some occasional absences, until the December following.

The Religious Intelligencer of September 2d, contains the following notice of the state of religious feeling in New Haven at that date.

"Reports have doubtless gone abroad, that a revival of religion has commenced in this city. We have felt desirous to communicate this good news to our readers, that they might rejoice with us; but believing that ill effects are sometimes produced by a premature disclosure, when a revival has but partially commenced in the hearts of individuals or in a community, we have heretofore observed a silence on this subject, waiting to see what the Lord was about to do for us. A revival of religion has been felt in the hearts of some christians in this place, for some time past, and they have had a holy confidence, that a shower of divine grace was about to be poured out in answer to their prayers, on this dry and thirsty place. We have seen the cloud like a man's hand, and we now hear the sound of abundance of rain; verily the Lord is among us, convincing of sin, of righteousness and of

judgment—many are pricked in the heart, some are rejoicing in the Lord, and convictions and conversions are daily multiplying. The power and the mercy of God are extensively felt in college, and many of the dear youth have been brought to submit to the sceptre of Immanuel; and many others are bowed down under a sense of sin, and are anxiously inquiring what they must do to be saved. We cannot be more particular at present. Christians, pray for us. Forget not that there are nearly three hundred young men of talents in this college, and their hearts are in the hands of that God who hears your prayers, if you are christians. May we be humble and rejoice in the Lord, and wait for his salvation."

The following letter to the young converts at Nassau, was written by Mr. Nettleton, five days after the above statement was published.

"NEW HAVEN, Sept 7, 1820.

"*My dear Friends:*

"The moment I take my pen to address you, I imagine myself seated in the midst of that same dear circle. Every name and every countenance appears familiar. The inquiry meeting, the crowded assembly, the heaving sigh, the solemn stillness, and the joyful countenances awaken all the tender sensibilities of my heart. My dear friends, no friendship, no attachment in this world, is equal to that created in a revival of religion.

"The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above."

"What is felt at such a season, is in anticipation of the joys of the heavenly world. I doubt not your hearts retain the sweet recollection of what Paul hints to the Ephesian converts. 'Who hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' But, my dear friends, after all, *the milk and the honey lie beyond this wilder-*

ness world. A voice from heaven is heard, 'Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest.'

"By this time some of you begin to learn, that you are on the field of battle. The world, the flesh and the devil, are potent enemies. You will have need to buckle on the whole armor of God. But whatever may betide, never, *no never* think of dropping the subject. True, the conflict may be sharp, and the pathway to heaven steep and difficult, but, brethren, *the time is short.* The conflict will soon be over. Think not so much about present enjoyment, as about present duty.

"I must give you a short account of the revival in this place. Meetings are held every evening in the week, crowded, still, and solemn as eternity. Every Monday evening, we meet the anxious ones in a large ball-room. We have had from sixty to about three hundred assembled at these meetings, all solemn, and many in deep distress of soul. The cloud of divine influence, has gone rapidly over our heads, and covered us with awful solemnity. And there is the sound of abundance of rain. The fields have whitened every where, and we are in danger of losing much of the harvest, because we cannot reap every where at once.

"We visit by appointment, and make a number of visits in a day at a given hour. We sometimes meet ten or fifteen, and sometimes thirty at once. We converse a little with each one, speak a word to all in general, pray and pass on to another circle, and so we spend our time. Our visits are generally short, except one which will never be forgotten. This was August 25, at 2 o'clock, P. M., at the house of Mr. B. We entered the house at the time appointed, and found about twenty persons sitting around the room in pensive silence. All had been more or less anxious for a number of days, and one was in awful distress. This one I addressed more particularly, and urged the duty of immediate repentance, not without some hope that relief would be obtained on the spot; for

I felt sure that this state of feeling, could not long be sustained. While pressing the conscience of this sinner, I found that this distress had spread nearly throughout the circle. I detained them the usual time, and advised them all to retire home to their closets. Some started and went out of the door, and others sat still with heavy hearts. Very soon, Emily returned, exclaiming, 'O, I cannot go home, I dare not go. I shall lose my concern. What shall I do?' and threw herself down in a chair, and her head on the table, in the deepest agony All at once she became silent, and gently raised her head with a placid countenance, and was heard to say in a mild tone of voice, 'O, I can submit, I can love Christ. How easy it is; why did I not do it before.' We sat in silent amazement. Every word sunk deep into our hearts. We felt the conviction that God was there. She seized her next companion by the hand, and with all the tenderness becoming a fellow sinner, began to press those very truths, which had so distressed her own heart, the duty of immediate repentance and submission to God. Every word became an arrow. I felt that the work was taken out of my hands, for I perceived that God had made her the most powerful preacher. All at once, A. became silent, and lifted her head with a countenance beaming with joy. 'The Saviour has come—O how happy.' This sent fresh alarm through every heart. And now A. and E. unite heart and hand, and begin with H. who had been in deep distress for some time. They urge with all the tenderness and firm decision of those who had felt the conviction, the necessity, and reasonableness of immediate repentance, and submission to God. The subject pressed harder and harder and harder still, when all at once, H. was brought out of darkness into marvelous light. These three now unite heart and hand, and with one voice bear testimony to the same heart-rending truth that God is right and the sinner wrong. The time would fail me to finish the story of this visit. We met at 2 o'clock, P. M., and were detained more than three hours. Suffice it

to say, I never saw or heard of such an afternoon visit before, for the one half has not been told. At the close, we began to look about us to see, and inquire, *what hath God wrought!* We brought them into one circle. I said, is it possible! This is too much! Had I not seen it, I could not have believed it. For nine of those who entered the room in deep distress, were now rejoicing in hope. The anxious ones had retired, and we were left in a circle of young converts, if they are not deceived. *Not a hint had been given that one soul had experienced religion, or had any reason to hope.* This was the feeling, 'It is right I should love and serve God, and this I intend to do, whether saved or lost.' Oh, it was a delightful circle, humble, tender, affectionate and joyful. They appeared like children of the same great family.

"About eighty have been brought to rejoice in hope in this city during five weeks past. Besides these, about twenty-five students in Yale College, have become hopeful subjects of divine grace. But we much fear the bustle of commencement. It would be nothing strange, if all our prospects of a future harvest should be blighted, before another week shall end. Pray for us. My love to all my dear friends in Nassau, and tell them how I long to see them. *Live near to God. Live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.* In short, '*Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ, that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.*'

Yours as ever."

The reader will observe that in describing the scene of thrilling interest which occurred at the house of Mr. B., Mr. Nettleton says, "*Not a hint had been given that one soul had experienced religion, or had any reason to hope.*" This accords with his uniform practice. He never told persons that they had reason to hope. He would set before them with great plain-

ness, the distinguishing evidences of regeneration, and enjoin it upon them to be faithful and honest in the application of these evidences to themselves.

The reader may be curious to know what became of these nine individuals, who were thus suddenly, and almost simultaneously, brought to rejoice in hope; and the suspicion may perhaps have crossed his mind, that with most of them the change was the effect of sympathy, and was only temporary. This, however, appears not to have been the case. I have understood that they all gave very satisfactory evidence of piety. Five of them have departed this life, all of whom died peacefully, and some of them very triumphantly. Those who survive, it is believed, continue to adorn their christian profession. Of two that are dead, viz. Susan B. Marble, and Adeline Marble, interesting memoirs were published. Susan B. Marble was the youngest of the nine, being in the fourteenth year of her age. She died Feb. 4th, 1821, the day on which she, with one hundred other individuals was to have been received into the church. She appears to have been a youth of remarkably amiable disposition. Her biographer speaking of her state of mind while under conviction, says, "It was peculiarly interesting to converse with her at this time. A person ignorant of the natural character of man, as delineated in the scriptures, would think that one so young and amiable could need nothing new; yet according to the estimate of the Saviour of sinners, she still lacked one thing. This she felt and deplored. What chiefly distressed her, was, the sinfulness and hardness of her heart, and its opposition to God."

I quote this remark, for the purpose of turning the attention of the reader to the fact, that those who were converted under Mr. Nettleton's preaching, however young and however amiable, were brought to see *the sinfulness and hardness of their hearts, and their opposition to God.*

In a letter from Mr. Nettleton to Mrs. Parmele, of Bolton;

dated May 15th, 1822, there is a touching allusion to the scenes above described.

"You recollect reading an account of the death of Susan B. Marble, in New Haven. She was one of the nine who were brought out rejoicing in an afternoon's visit. When I was in New Haven last, Betsey Bishop, another of that number died. She was an interesting youth. I had then so far recovered my health, that I went to the conference room, and addressed the people on the subject of her death, and alluded to that interesting afternoon. A number of that same circle called to see me one evening, and to talk over the interesting event. They used to meet frequently by themselves, and converse and pray together. It was a little band of love. Adeline Marble, Susan's sister, was one of this happy number. She was present at that evening visit—still clad in mourning. Last evening, I saw from the paper, that she too has *gone to her long home*. I retired, and could not but weep—'Child of mortality.' Thus three of these blooming youth, have found an early grave. Had you seen them as I have, you too would weep, as well as rejoice."

The Religious Intelligencer for Oct. 7th, contains the following statement in relation to the progress of this revival.

"We mentioned not long since, that a revival had commenced in this city. Since that time God has done great things for us, which has given joy on earth, and we believe great joy in heaven. Since the commencement of this glorious work of grace, there have been within the bounds of charity, about two hundred souls, belonging to the two Congregational societies, including about thirty in college before its recess, who have been called out of darkness into marvelous light. This, when compared with the five preceding years of dearth, will be considered as the *commencement*, at least, of a glorious harvest. And we still hope for greater things than these. Truly, this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. He works like himself, and none can hinder. The blindest infidel

must see and acknowledge that it is the work of God. And could he witness our assemblies, where three or four hundred are convened for the purpose of inquiry, and behold the solemnity and the distress for sin, we think he would feel that the Lord was there. And could he behold the same company of convicted, trembling sinners, in smiling crowds, rejoicing in the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, he would be equally convinced that the same Holy Spirit, who convinced them of sin, is, when the sinner has submitted, the blessed comforter which Christ promised to send.

"The work is still in progress. It is the still, small voice that convinces of sin. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth; we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth.' We have no new gospel, no other terms of salvation than those that have always been held out, for acceptance. The sinner has been taught invariably, that he must not look for comfort without submission. And such has been the faithfulness of our spiritual teachers, that in most cases, those who have been slain by the law, and brought to despair of climbing up some other way, have been led directly to the Saviour, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and who has always been ready and willing to receive them."

This revival continued for many months, and spread into all the surrounding region. In the Religious Intelligencer for June 9th, 1821, is the following statement:

"On the last Sabbath, twenty-six were added to the church under the pastoral care of the Rev. Mr. Merwin, making in all, about three hundred added to the congregational churches in this city, as fruits of the revival. We trust a goodly number more will still come over from the ranks of the enemy, and publicly avow their friendship for Him who has said, 'whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father, which is in heaven.'

"Since the revival commenced in this city, it has extended to most of our neighboring towns. Out of thirty-one congre-

gations in the county of New-Haven, at least twenty-five have been visited, during the past winter and spring, with the special presence of the Lord; and it is estimated that within these limits, between fifteen hundred and two thousand souls have been called by his grace, out of nature's darkness into marvelous light."

Mr. Nettleton confined his labors to New Haven and Yale College, until the 18th of September, when he repaired to North Killingworth, his native place. He returned to New-Haven, October 10th, and continued there about a week, preaching several times. He labored there also for a season in the month of December.

His labors were greatly blessed in North Killingworth. He went there from New Haven, September 18. He mentions in his journal that on the 25th of that month he attended an inquiry meeting at which sixty-two were present. From this time, the work became very powerful and rapid in its progress. On the 29th, thirty were rejoicing in hope; and on the 23d of October, there were ninety rejoicing.

The Rev. Asa King, who was at that time pastor of the church in North Killingworth, in a letter dated July 16th, 1844, says, "That ever-to-be-remembered revival commenced about the last of August, in a Bible class, which for some months, I had weekly attended; and it had been in pleasing progress for some time before brother Nettleton's arrival; when under his labors it received a fresh impulse, and went forward with unusual power. As he used occasionally to visit his native place, to rest awhile from the exhausting labors of a revival, I had the privilege of gathering many useful hints from his communications, and I am free to say, that to him, under God, I am very much indebted for the measures I adopted, and for the course which, with a good degree of success, I pursued, before he came to my assistance. After spending several weeks at North Killingworth, he was called to New Haven, and then to Wethersfield, and visited us only occasionally.

"The hopeful converts were one hundred and sixty-two: one hundred and seven of whom united with the church at the communion season in January, and soon after twenty-five more —making in all one hundred and thirty-two. So far as I have known, with very few exceptions, they have been careful to maintain good works.

"The influence of that revival upon the church, was very happy. It produced unanimity of sentiment on doctrinal points about which they had long contended, and cordiality of feeling where there had been prejudices of long standing. Though brother Nettleton was a prophet in his own country; yet I doubt whether in any place, his labors were more highly appreciated than they were by those who had known him from his childhood."

In the months of October and November, he preached a few times in North Madison, where was a very interesting revival of religion, which was greatly promoted by his labors.

At the earnest solicitation of the Rev. Dr. Tenney, on the 23d of December, 1820, he came from New Haven to Wethersfield, where a work of grace had already commenced. He labored here with great success for three or four months, occasionally visiting other places in the vicinity.

The Religious Intelligencer, for April 13th, 1822, contains an account of this revival, written by Dr. Tenney, from which I make the following extract:

"Previous to the revival, our church consisted of about two hundred and sixty members. As its fruits, precisely two hundred more have been added. Of this addition seventy-nine are heads of families. Sixty-two are males, and thirty-two are young unmarried men, who with ten previously in the church, make forty-two. A number of others have indulged hope, who have not professed religion. Generally, the subjects of the work still appear well. Some instances of conversion have been strongly marked. The awakening of some has been sudden and powerful, and has soon issued in tri-

umphant peace. In others, it has been as the still, small voice One individual, who had been a total disbeliever in revelation, began and continued to examine the subject of religion with all the coolness of a mathematician; until in the course of a few weeks, the great truths of scripture, bore upon his conscience with insupportable power, and had almost that 'keen vibration' through his soul, which makes hell; and his heart yielded to God. One aged man said, 'If I have ever been born of God, it was on the day I was 76 years old.' Another said respecting himself, 'it was the day when I was 68.' In one family, a mother of eleven children, who had long gone to the table of Christ, *mourning* that of her great family there was not one to accompany her, now hopes that eight of her children, and two children-in-law, are the children of God. In another family, consisting of parents and seven children, all have indulged hope excepting one son who was absent at sea. Two of these are united to a different denomination. A widow, the mother of seven children, some of them pious years ago, now has hope of all the others; the whole family belong to the church. Nearly at the very time that a woman experienced religion at home, her husband experienced it at sea. Of the nature and joy of their next meeting, let christians judge.

"Greatly are we indebted to a number of neighboring ministers, whose labors here were of great use. Peculiar are our obligations to the Rev. ASAHEL NETTLETON, who was much with us, and whose labors were blessed eminently and extensively. To us and the churches in this region, he has been of as great use, as were to ancient Israel, their chariots and horsemen. Though in this work, there has been the strongest coincidence between the means used and the success, and between the prayerfulness of christians, and the conviction and conversion of sinners, yet God has displayed his glorious sovereignty as well as faithfulness. Here, and in this section of the country, God has illustriously displayed

his perfections in the work which is emphatically His. To Him all the glory is due. To Him let it be given now and evermore."

While in Wethersfield, Mr. Nettleton labored a part of the time in Newington, a parish in the town of Wethersfield, under the pastoral care of the Rev. Joab Brace. Here, as in other places, his labors were accompanied by the outpouring of the Spirit of God. There is an account of the revival in this place, published by Mr. Brace, in the Religious Intelligencer for May 11th, 1822. The following is an extract from this account.

"In the summer of 1820, an uncommon emotion was felt. There was *a sound in the top of the mulberry trees*, and although the indication was not distinctly understood at the time, yet the result has proved, that God had then actually gone forth. A number of serious persons were under distressing apprehension of ruin as coming on this place, and they cried unto the Lord for help. Several women of the church, privately instituted a weekly concert in the closet, to implore the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. A few sinners were uneasy, and yet without very definite impressions; and there was no awakening of a decisive character, until three or four months after this period.

"This religious concern may be traced to Wethersfield, and thence to New Haven, where the present series of revivals appear to have commenced in the summer of 1820. In Wethersfield, the work appeared with some distinctness in October; and in November, it began to be spoken of abroad; but there was no visible effect in this place. I thought it would be a local work, as revivals in this vicinity, had generally been in former times; and did not suppose that any measures were to be taken for extending it among our people; but it is of great benefit, that neighboring ministers and people visit frequently, a place favored with the energy of the Spirit of God. The people heard with awe, of what God

was doing in the first parish in this town; some persons went over to their meetings, and were distressed at the thought of this place being still passed by. Above all other means, what raised the general attention, was the coming of the Rev. Asahel Nettleton, on the last of December, 1820, as unexpectedly as a messenger from heaven, apparently commissioned from the Almighty Head of the Church, and accompanied by the Holy Spirit. Next morning, he preached on being ashamed of Christ. This fixed a listening ear. In the afternoon, he dwelt upon the causes of alarm to awakened sinners. In the evening the assembly was crowded, and the attention profound. His text was, *Behold I stand at the door and knock.* The discourse was closed with surprising effect, by repeating the hymn, 'Behold a stranger at the door.' When prayer was ended, while the people were standing, he made a very close application of the subject to their hearts, in a short address, which was very silently and solemnly heard. He requested them to retire without making a noise. 'I love to talk to you, you are so still. It looks as though the Spirit of God were here. Go away as still as possible. Do not talk by the way, lest you forget your own hearts. Do not ask how you like the preacher; but retire to your closets, bow before God; and give yourselves to him this night.' After the benediction, he inquired of many persons individually, 'have you made your peace with God? Do you calculate to attend to this subject?' Many promised that they would try to make their peace with God immediately—that they would repent that night—and a permanent impression was made. From this, the flame spread over the parish; the current of feeling was turned; the people gathered around their minister with peculiar attachment; meetings were crowded and solemn; the things of eternity filled the people with awe. The work of God seemed to be in almost every house. Mr. Nettleton continued his visits from the last of December to the

first of April, with a beneficial influence, which it is hoped will be felt in the world of glory.

"Friday, Jan. 26, 1821, was observed by the church as a special fast, in which they were joined by almost the whole congregation. It was a solemn season, and as we hope, a day of new life to some souls. In the evening, at sunset, a meeting for inquirers was held at my house, under the direction and management of Mr. Nettleton, while I met the church at another house for prayer. In the mean time, a great congregation had assembled at the meeting-house, many from the neighboring parishes; and there Mr. Nettleton discoursed with great effect, upon the story of the woman that washed the Saviour's feet with her tears; Luke viii. 37: to the end of the chapter. At this time, experimental religion had become the great theme of reflection and conversation, and it seemed as though all my people were pressing into the kingdom of heaven—numbers were every week embracing the hope that they had passed from death unto life. * * * The characteristics of the work may be thus stated. There were some instances of deep distress; but none of that overwhelming kind, in which subjects faint, or fall to the ground, or are unable to leave their seats. In some cases, convictions were long continued; in others, the heart was speedily bowed. Some, after long distress, rose almost imperceptibly to a faint hope; in others, the hope was bright and satisfying. No instances of extravagant joy occurred, though several were much elevated. In convictions, the subjects were much affected with their guiltiness before God, as with fear of everlasting destruction. When the sinner was humbled, he acknowledged his great depravity, his desert of eternal condemnation, and his entire dependence on sovereign grace in the sight of God, and was pleased with the idea of unconditional submission to the will and glory of God. One prominent feature in the converts, was, a fear of deception. Much was said on the danger of false hopes, which probably had

an influence to check flights of joy; for they were much and anxiously inquiring how far the adversary might possibly beguile. * * * * * * * * * *

On the whole, it has been a serious and delightful season. Many souls, we hope, have been truly brought home to Christ; but also, many we fear have quenched the Holy Spirit, and taken up their portion in this world; still prayer is made without ceasing for them. During Mr. Nettleton's stay with us, this place was a common center of divine entertainment, in comparison with which, all the pleasures of this world are faint and feeble. The multitudes who flocked in from the neighboring congregations, appeared to feel themselves richly repaid for their pains; and some of them carried home the spirit, where it spread and operated powerfully, until the region appeared like the garden of God."

Feb. 18th, 1821, Mr. Nettleton commenced his labors in Farmington. The results which ensued, may be learned from the following account, written by the Rev. Dr. Porter, pastor of the church in that place, and published in the appendix to Dr. Sprague's Lectures on Revivals.

"The year 1821 was eminently, in Connecticut, a year of revivals. Between eighty and a hundred congregations were signally blessed. From the commencement of the year, a new state of feeling began to appear in this town. On the first Sabbath in February, I stated to the assembly, the tokens of the gracious presence of God in several places of the vicinity, and urged the duties peculiarly incumbent on us at such a season. This I had often done before, but not with the same effect. Professors of religion now began evidently to awake. They had an anxiety for themselves and for the people, that would allow them no rest. In their communications with each other and with the world, they were led spontaneously to confess their unfaithfulness, and a few without the church, about the same time, were pungently convicted. In this state of things, Rev. Mr. Nettleton made us his first visit.

His preaching on the evening of a Lord's day in this month, from Acts ii. 37, was sent home by the power of the Spirit upon the hearts of many; and his discourse on the Wednesday evening following, from Gen. vi. 3, was blessed to the conviction of a still greater number. As many as fifty persons, it was afterwards ascertained, dated their first decided purpose of immediately seeking their salvation from that evening; and it is worthy of remark, that the same sermon was preached on the following week to two other large and solemn assemblies, in the adjoining parishes, with no special effect that could afterwards be traced. The fact probably was, that here it convinced numbers that the Spirit was already striving with them, and that then was their day. 'A word spoken in due season, how good is it!' At a meeting of the anxious, on the evening of February 26, there were present, about a hundred and seventy. Here were persons of almost every age and class—some who a few weeks before, had put the subject of serious piety at a scornful distance, and others who had drowned every thought of religion in giddy mirth, now bending their knees together in supplication, or waiting in silent reflection, for a minister of the gospel to pass along, and tell them individually, what they must do. Twelve were found to have lately become peaceful in hope, and a great number to be powerfully convicted of sin. From this time, so rapid was the progress of the work, that at the next similar meeting, March 12th, there were present a hundred and eighty, (the room would hold no more,) of whom, fifty supposed, that since the commencement of the revival, they had become reconciled to God; and a week afterwards, I had the names of more than ninety, who indulged the same persuasion concerning themselves.

"The state of feeling which, at this time pervaded the town, was interesting beyond description. There was no commotion, but a stillness in our very streets; a serenity in the aspect of the pious; and a solemnity apparent in almost

all, which forcibly impressed us with the conviction, that in very deed, *God was in this place.* Public meetings, however, were not very frequent. They were so appointed, as to afford opportunity for the same individual to hear preaching twice a week, beside on the Sabbath. Occasionally there were also meetings of an hour in the morning or at noon, at private dwellings, at which the serious in the neighborhood were convened, on short notice, for prayer and conference. The members of the church also met weekly, in convenient sections, for prayer, and commonly on the evenings selected for the meetings of the anxious. From these various meetings, the people were accustomed to retire directly, and with little communication together, to their respective homes. They were disposed to be much alone, and were spontaneously led to take the Word of God for their guide. The Bible was preferred to all other books, and was searched daily with eager inquiry.

"Mr. Nettleton continued with us, except during a few short intervals, till about the middle of April. To his labors, so far as human instrumentality was directly concerned, the progress of the revival must be chiefly ascribed. The topics on which he principally dwelt, were the unchangeable obligations of the divine law, the deceitful and entirely depraved character of the natural heart, the free, indiscriminate offers of the gospel; the reasonableness and necessity of immediate repentance; the vanity of those excuses to which awakened sinners are accustomed to resort; and the manner, guilt, and danger of slighting, resisting, and opposing the operations of the Holy Spirit. His addresses were not formal discussions, first of one, and then of another of these sub jects, but a free declaration of the truth of God concerning them all, just as they lie in the course of spiritual experience, and would best subserve the particular end which he was laboring at the time to gain. They were too plain to be mis-

understood, too fervent to be unheeded, and too searching and convincing to be treated with indifference.

"It was a favorable circumstance, that among the first subjects of the work, there was a large proportion of the more wealthy and intelligent class. A considerable number of youths, belonging chiefly to this class, had just finished a course of biblical instruction, for which I had met them weekly, for more than a year. These, with scarcely an exception, at the very commencement of the revival, embraced the gospel which they had learned; and by their experience of its power, commended it to the families where they belonged. Within about three months, I suppose there were about two hundred and fifty members of the congregation, who supposed that they had passed from death unto life. On the first Sabbath in June, a hundred and fifteen were added to the church, and at subsequent periods, a hundred and twenty besides. Of these, a few have since been rejected, and others have declined from their first love. But I have not perceived that a greater proportion of hopeful conversions in this revival, than in others, previous or subsequent to it, have proved unsound. Many have died, and many have removed from our immediate connexion, but those who remain, now constitute the chief strength of the church."

This account was written in 1832, eleven years after the revival.

The Religious Intelligencer for Sept. 1st, 1821, contains an extract of a letter dated July 16th, of the same year, giving the following brief notice of this revival.

"Of all the revivals that I have ever witnessed, none have so deeply interested my heart, none appear so strikingly to manifest the power of God, or the excellence of the christian character, as that with which Farmington has been blessed. Oh, I have often thought, while residing among this people, what glorious work a revival of religion would make in this town. The blessed effect of such a work I have now wit-

nessed; and it is beyond any thing I could have had faith to pray for. The change in the moral aspect of things is astonishing. Many who have been very far from God and righteousness, have as we humbly hope, recently been brought nigh by the blood of his Son. Some, whose moral condition once appeared hopeless, are now in their right minds, at the feet of Jesus. Many of the professed devotees of Mammon, have recently parted with all for Christ. A large class of this community have been eagerly engaged in the pursuit of riches; and their clashing interests, combined with these feelings of selfishness and pride—which avarice fosters, have produced, as might be expected, quarrels among neighbors, and much hostility of feeling. The quelling of this hostile spirit, was among the first visible effects of the Spirit of God. Of many, who have formerly been not even on *speaking terms*, it may now be said, as it was of the early disciples, 'See how these christians love one another.' Let any person witness the glorious effects which this work of grace has produced in Farmington, and still disapprove of a revival of religion; and it would not be difficult, I think, to decide to whose kingdom that person belongs."

CHAPTER VIII.

Labors in Pittsfield, Lenox, Lee, Litchfield, New Haven, Somers, Tolland, and South Wilbraham.

In the year 1820, there was a revival of religion in Pittsfield, Mass. The Rev. Dr. Humphrey, late President of Amherst College, was pastor of the church in that town. The religious attention had subsided, and the revival was supposed to be at an end, when in the spring of 1821, under the preaching of Mr. Nettleton, God again appeared in his glory to build up Zion. There is an account of this revival from the pen of Dr. Humphrey, in the sixth volume of the Religious Intelligencer, from which I make the following extract.

"Early in the month of May, the Rev. Asahel Nettleton, whose name is so familiar both to the friends and enemies of revivals, came to this town to 'rest awhile,' and to await the future calls of Providence. But he was not to remain long inactive; and the three or four weeks which he thought of spending in retirement here, were prolonged through as many months of unceasing labor. By the middle of May, there was some excitement; but whether it was the effect of mere curiosity, or of the Spirit beginning to move on the hearts of the people, it was at first impossible to determine. For a fortnight or more, nothing very decisive took place. Which way the scale would turn, was to us altogether uncertain. Every thing appeared to be hushed into silent and anxious expectation. It was the stillness that precedes an earthquake—though the subsequent shock was neither sudden nor violent.

"In the latter part of May, we ventured, though with considerable solicitude, to appoint a meeting for the inquiring, if there should be any such in the congregation. Nearly twenty attended, and some of them were found to be under very serious impressions. No professor of religion was invited or expected to attend. It was a meeting exclusively for those who were beginning to realize their exposure and their guilt. The next meeting was better attended, and it was found that a few were sinking in the deep waters of conviction.

"From this time, the work solemnly and steadily advanced, particularly in the heart of the town, where the strong man armed, had for a long time kept his palace. He lifted up his voice to summon the mighty to his standard, but it was in vain, for the God of Jacob was with us. So far was the enemy from making any impression upon the camp of the faithful, that his own ranks were thinned and disheartened, by the desertion of many on whom he had placed great reliance, and of whose unshaken allegiance, he had confidently boasted.

"During the whole month of June, the revival grew more interesting and decisive every day. Many were rejoicing in hope, and more were alarmed at their own stupidity and danger. The voice of prayer was heard for the first time in several of our principal families. Not less than five domestic altars were erected in one day. In this state of things, and when religion was the principal topic of conversation in all circles, whether large or small, it was natural for those who felt a new and deep interest in the subject, to wish for an appropriate celebration of the fourth of July, and arrangements were accordingly made for a prayer meeting at sunrise, and a public religious service in the afternoon. The prayer meeting was well attended. At two o'clock, our large house of worship was filled, and we had the pleasure of meeting there many of our christian friends from different and even remote parts of the county. The audience was solemn, notwithstanding * * * * * But here let me

draw a veil over the painful interruptions which we experienced. Charity hopeth all things, *endureth all things;* and he is but a poor soldier, who can be frightened by mere powder. It is due to justice to state, that all the respectable people in the town, (whatever some of them might think of the expediency of such a celebration,) strongly disapproved of whatever tended to disturb us in our worship. But God meant it for good. Through the riches of his grace, an impulse was that day given to the revival, which was long and happily felt, and which we shall have reason to remember with no ordinary emotions of wonder and gratitude, for a great while to come. Instances of conviction and conversion became more frequent than they had been; and from this time, the work continued with little abatement, though never so rapid in its progress, as some revivals, till the month of October.

"The third Sabbath in September will not be forgotten by the present generation in Pittsfield; for 'that Sabbath day was an high day.'

"To see more than eighty persons, and one half of them heads of families, rising up to enter into covenant with God and his people—to look round and see who they were, and think where some of them had been—to behold them coming forward, high and low, rich and poor together, and kneeling to receive the baptismal seal—to hear their song—to witness their emotions, and to welcome them for the first time to the table of the Lord—Oh it was a scene which I shall not attempt to describe. We had our aged Simeons and Elizabeths there; and, we doubt not, there was joy in heaven. A solemn awe and stillness pervaded the great congregation, and some sinners were that day awakened by what they saw and heard in the sanctuary."

In the foregoing account, there is allusion to what took place on the fourth of July. A description of that scene was given, by a person who was present, in a letter to the editor of the Charleston (S. C.) Intelligencer. It was afterwards

copied into the Religious Intelligencer. I would gladly insert the whole letter would my limits permit.

The facts were these. The opposers of religion, finding that a *religious* celebration of our National Independence was agreed on, resolved to have a political celebration. They occupied the church in the morning.

"At 2 o'clock," says the above-mentioned writer, "they who loved the Lord, and respected his ordinances, began to assemble in the same place. The church was crowded. While the people were assembling, and as they passed near the rioters, crackers were repeatedly exploded, in order to intimidate them. The service began. It went calmly and sweetly forward. The Rev. Mr. Humphrey, the pastor, took his text from John viii: 36. '*If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*'

"He had not proceeded far, when the word—*fire*—was given, and our ears were suddenly stunned, and the congregation startled, by the report of cannon. It was the attack of the adversary, and it was well kept up. But unfortunately for him and his agents, every shot preached louder than ten thousand thunders. Meanwhile the drums beat, and the fifes played, and the soldiers marched back and forth before the church door, animated moreover by the music of the cannon, and the prospect of a glorious triumph over the cause of God. But alas! they were laboring hard to defeat themselves. Some few christians, indeed, of delicate frame, and quick sensibilities, were agitated and alarmed; and others, though not intimidated, dreaded the consequences of this violent attack; but generally, there were high hopes that this tumult would be overruled for good. And so it was. So skillfully did the preacher allude to, and apply his discourse to the conduct of the opposition out of doors; such advantage did he take of every blast of the cannon and every play of the drum, by some well pointed remark, that it all went like a two-edged sword to the hearts of listening sinners. Indeed, Mr. H.

afterwards informed me, that had he showed the heads of his sermon to his opposers previously, and earnestly requested them, when he had reached such a point in his sermon, to *fire*, and when he reached another point *fire*, they could not more effectually have subserved the purpose of his discourse, than they did. Those gentlemen who had walked in the opposers' procession, hung their heads, were disgusted, and in some instances were convicted deeply of sin. One gentleman, who had been previously somewhat serious, declared to me that every shot of the cannon pierced his soul, filled him with a kind of indescribable horror, and brought him, through the blessing of God, to such a hatred and detestation of sin in himself and others, as constrained him quickly to fly to Christ.

"I confess I trembled for the ark of God. Indeed I was so uneasy, that after the sermon was concluded, I went and expostulated with the ringleader, whose companion in wickodness I once had been, and over whom I thought I might have some influence. But I had reason to believe that in general the spirits of the children of God were perfectly unruffled. I sat near the Rev. Mr. Nettleton, and so delighted was he with the discourse, and so accurately *prescient* too was he of the result, that whenever an apt allusion dropped from the lips of the preacher, he would turn round with a holy smile, and whenever a shot from the cannon pierced our ears, he would say—it would involuntarily escape from him—'*that is good—that is good.*' Speaking afterwards of the events of this day, he observed to me, '*Did you not feel calm. I thought there was a deep and majestic calmness overspreading the minds of christians.*' I found that very many did indeed feel so. Nothing could be more appropriate, or more naturally arise out of his text, than Mr. H's. description of the miserable bondage in which those out of doors were faithfully serving their master.

"The ministers looked forward with an alternation of hope

and fear to the *meeting of inquiry*, as that meeting was generally esteemed a kind of spiritual thermometer, by which the degree of warmth and feeling in the society could be measured. This was held for an hour previously to the evening service. The time arrived. It was crowded—never so full before. The daring and outrageous attack in the day had driven many to the place in which he that appeared was always supposed to be asking, '*What must I do to be saved!*' This question was emphatically asked in the meeting. It was found that a most powerful impulse had been given to the revival. Nor was this impulse at all weakened by the evening service.

"The house was overflowing. You was there. You marked the progress of things. Mr. Nettleton that evening put forth his mightiest efforts. His discourse was one continued flash of conviction. He spoke from that part of Genesis xix, which treats of the destruction of Sodom. '*Up, get ye out of this place,*' was closely and powerfully applied, and when he had given a full account of the nature and circumstances of Lot's expostulations with his sons-in-law, he came to speak of the awful stillness which remained over Sodom, while Lot was taking his leave. Oh, then, when all his warnings were despised, and they would not believe a word he said, then—then when Lot was safely out of Sodom—what a terrible storm of fire ensued! You remember, he turned the heads of the audience completely towards the windows. They involuntarily looked round to see the conflagration—to see Sodom in flames. It was quite overpowering.

"This was an eventful and glorious day for Pittsfield. From that time forward Emmanuel spread his trophies among great and small. They who thought to crush the work of God were bitterly disappointed, and retired with shame. The fruits of this revival are *one hundred and forty converts.* Praise the Lord."

While Mr. Nettleton was laboring in Pittsfield, he preached

frequently in Lenox. With what success will appear from the following statement of the Rev. Dr. Shepard, pastor of the church in that place.

"In the spring of 1821, Dr. Nettleton came to Pittsfield, in consequence of an invitation from Dr. Humphrey. Dr. Nettleton was in poor health, and Dr. Humphrey invited him to his house, with the hope, that by being relieved from pressing calls, he might recover his health. When Dr. Nettleton first came to Pittsfield, he took no part, I believe, in religious meetings. After a while, he preached once or twice in the course of a week. His preaching was soon attended with a divine blessing, and was undoubtedly instrumental of a revival of religion in Pittsfield, and several other towns in the vicinity. When I was from home on a journey, Dr. Nettleton preached in Lenox on the Sabbath, and two or three times in the course of the week after; and on my return, I found a revival begun, and progressing in the town. Many were awakened, and some were rejoicing in hope. He afterwards preached occasionally in my parish, as his engagements elsewhere permitted. The number of hopeful converts who were received into the church as the fruits of that revival, was ninety-one. Almost all of them continued to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, by the virtues of a sober, righteous, and godly life. '*These,*' as I find stated in my church record, '*These are the fruits of a revival of religion in this town last summer. Rev. Asahel Nettleton, was apparently instrumental of great good in that season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. May the Lord reward him for his labors of love; and may we as a church, be more humble and prayerful; and may God in his sovereign mercy continue to shed down his divine influence here.*'

"You ask, 'what were the characteristics of his preaching, and in what did its chief excellencies consist?' I answer. He held no protracted meetings; nor did he adopt any new measures apparently for *effect.* His labors consisted princi-

pally in preaching the *Word*. He sometimes appointed what was called an inquiry meeting. At such meetings, he manifested an almost instinctive discernment of character; and his remarks, in accordance with it, were sometimes attended with a powerful effect. In his preaching, his humility was apparent to all. He was, I believe, eminently a man of *prayer*. That he entered the pulpit, or the inquiring meeting directly from the 'mount of communion' with his Maker, no one would readily doubt, who was witness of the holy calm, the indescribable, the almost unearthly solemnity and earnestness of his manner. His countenance was peculiarly expressive, his demeanor was dignified, and his voice was at times very melodious. The joy with which his heart seemed to be filled by a contemplation of the love of Jesus, in giving his life a ransom for sinners, marked his preaching, and imparted an unction and uncommon energy to his eloquence. When he spake of the glories of heaven, it was, *almost*, as if he had been there himself. When he made his appeals to the sinner, he made them with a directness, which placed before him, as in a mirror, his utterly lost state. It seemed at times, as if he was about to uncover the bottomless pit, and to invite the ungodly to come and listen to the groans of the damned; and then, drinking deeply of the spirit of his master when he wept over Jerusalem, to urge them to flee from the wrath to come, with an expression of countenance, which it is not in my power to describe. Many who came with a skeptical and cavilling spirit to hear him, had their attention arrested at once to the great truths communicated by him, and at the close of the meeting, were anxiously inquiring what they should do to be saved. The success attending his preaching, seemed, in short, to be a plain and clear illustration of all the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, by a humble, devout, praying, unpretending man, constrained to his duty by the love of Christ.

"The influence of the revival upon the interests of the

church in this and other places, was very happy, and is plainly to be seen, especially in regard to the faith once delivered to the saints, up to this time. The tendency of Dr. Nettleton's preaching, and indeed of all his labors here and elsewhere, as far as I have learned in regard to them, has been to establish the churches in the faith and order of the gospel, and to strengthen the hands of every clergyman with whom he labored. I never heard that any minister, among whose people Dr. Nettleton labored, ever expressed any regret that he had been with them. On the contrary, when I at any time meet with a minister who formerly had assistance from Dr. Nettleton, especially in a season of revival, he never fails to express great respect for him, and unfeigned gratitude for the benefit derived to *him* and *his people* from his labors."

In the month of August he spent a few days in Lee. In the letter of Dr. Hyde, published in the appendix to Dr. Sprague's Lectures on Revivals, there is a brief notice of his labors in that town. Dr. Hyde says, "In the summer of 1821, there was an evident increase of solemnity in the church and congregation, and some individuals were known to be anxious for their souls. This appearance continued for several weeks, under the same means of grace which the people had long enjoyed, but none were found who rejoiced in hope. The church often assembled for prayer, and in the month of August, we observed a day of fasting and prayer. The meeting house was well filled, and a deep solemnity pervaded the congregation. The hearts of many seemed to 'burn within them,' and there were increasing indications in the rising cloud, 'of abundance of rain.' We began to hear from one and another a new language, the language of submission to God.

"At this interesting crisis, the Rev. Asahel Nettleton spent a few days with us. He preached five sermons to overflowing assemblies, and his labors were remarkably blessed. The Spirit of God came down upon us, 'like a rushing mighty wind.' Conversions were frequent, sometimes several in a

day, and the change in the views and feelings of the subjects was wonderful. At the suggestion of Mr. Nettleton, I now instituted what are called *inquiry meetings*. More than a hundred persons attended the first. These meetings, as I found them to be convenient, were continued through this revival; and I have ever since made use of them, as occasion required, sometimes weekly for many months in succession."

Mr. Nettleton continued his labors in Berkshire county, making Pittsfield the principal theatre of his operations, until about the middle of August, when he returned to Farmington, where he spent a few days in delightful intercourse with his christian friends, and then in the early part of September, repaired to Litchfield. He had labored much in Litchfield at different times previously, in connection with the Rev. Dr. Beecher; but as it was before he began to keep a journal, I am unable to fix the dates. His labors at these different periods were highly appreciated both by Dr. Beecher and his people, and were evidently blessed to the salvation of many souls. In the autumn of 1821, Dr. Beecher was obliged to suspend his labors, and travel for his health. At this time Mr. Nettleton supplied his pulpit from the beginning of September, till the middle of January, 1822. When he commenced his labors, he found things in a very unpromising state. A bad state of feeling existed in the church, and great spiritual apathy pervaded the congregation. But it was not long before things began to assume a new aspect. The church seemed to awake out of sleep, and to mourn over their backslidings. A spirit of prayer was poured out upon the people of God; and sinners began to inquire what they must do to be saved.

Soon after the revival commenced, some events occurred which he feared would divert the attention of the people from the great concerns of the soul. One was a cattle show, and another a military review. But this unhappy result was prevented by the blessing of God on his prudent management. He particularly feared the effect of the military review on

certain young men who were military officers, and whose minds were seriously impressed. He requested those individuals to meet him on the morning of that day, at the early dawn. They came. He told them that he was convinced that the Spirit of God was striving with them, but he feared that their impressions might be dissipated by the bustle of that day. He warned them to be on their guard—to refrain from all vain and trifling conversation, and especially to avoid tasting a drop of ardent spirits. He then affectionately and earnestly commended them to God in prayer. This timely warning had the desired effect.

The following extract of a letter of his, dated Litchfield, Oct. 15, 1821, shows the state of the revival at that date.

"I have attended many meetings of late, and some of them crowded and awfully solemn. More attend meetings than can crowd into the lower part of the meeting house—more it is said, than usually meet on the Sabbath. I think I may say, there is great solemnity throughout this place. A number are in deep distress of soul—some of them men of influence. About fourteen are rejoicing in hope. I have ventured to appoint one meeting of inquiry. About one hundred attended, but they were not all under conviction. We are truly in an interesting state, trembling between hope and fear. I wish I had time to tell you a number of anecdotes about us in Litchfield.

In another letter written by him at New Haven, in March, 1822, he thus speaks of the revival at Litchfield.

"The number of hopeful converts is about seventy, of whom thirty-eight have made a profession of religion. There is much christian feeling in that place, and the work is gradually advancing, as a joint letter from a number of the young converts has recently informed me."

Jan. 17, 1822, Mr. Nettleton again visited New Haven, and labored with great success in the city and college, be-

tween two and three months. The following is an extract of a letter written by him at New Haven, March 20, 1822.

"After more than a year's absence, I have come again to New Haven. In the first place, I made an appointment exclusively for young converts, in a spacious ball-room, where we used to hold meetings of inquiry. Though the evening was dark and muddy, about three hundred assembled. Here we called to mind, the sighs, and sobs, and songs, and *joys that are past*—scenes never to be forgotten. And when I spoke of three of their number, who used to mingle their tears and joys with theirs on that floor, but whose faces we should see no more, for they had gone triumphantly to rest, it was truly melting. We knelt, and wept, and prayed together.

"I did not intend to tarry long in this place; but I have preached more than twenty times, and attended a number of inquiry meetings—at one, one hundred and sixty attended. There are seventeen recently rejoicing in hope, and five of them are students in college."

On May 12, 1822, Mr. Nettleton commenced his labors in Somers. He labored in this town and South Wilbraham, alternately, occasionally preaching at Tolland and some other towns in the vicinity, until the following October, when his labors were suddenly arrested by a dangerous sickness. A powerful revival of religion commenced under his preaching at Somers, which spread into the surrounding region. The Rev. William L. Strong, was pastor of the church in Somers. In a letter to the editor of the Religious Intelligencer, dated August 1st, 1822, he gives the following account of the state of things among his people, and the people of South Wilbraham, an adjoining town.

"Dear Sir—I am prompted by my own feelings, and by a knowledge of your solicitude to communicate to the public, such information as relates to the enlargement of Christ's kingdom, to announce the fact that God is in the midst of us

displaying the wonders of his grace. About eight weeks since, it began to be manifest that the Spirit was moving upon the hearts of God's people, and that sinners were no longer indifferent to the momentous question of the trembling jailor. Soon the voice of distress was heard; and soon too it was mingled with that of rejoicing and praise. The work has been still and powerful. Between ninety and a hundred are rejoicing in hope. At our last meeting of anxious inquiry, about one hundred and seventy were present, including sixty who hope that they have recently passed from death unto life. The work is still spreading and has, perhaps, never been more interesting than at the present moment.

"In South Wilbraham, adjoining this place on the north, God is also doing a great work. Nearly forty have, within a few weeks, taken up hopes, and the revival is extending itself with singular power. These are the Lord's doings, and they are marvelous in our eyes. To him be all the glory.

Yours very respectfully,

WM. L. STRONG."

There is a somewhat detailed account of the revival in South Wilbraham, published in the seventh volume of the Religious Intelligencer, from which I extract the following.

"In the early part of May last, the Rev. A. Nettleton, (who, under the providence of God, has been the great instrument in this work,) retired from New Haven to Somers, the town adjoining this on the South, for the purpose of recovering his strength, which was much impaired by sickness. A few weeks after he arrived, a report reached this people, that there was some religious excitement at Somers; and that a Mr. Nettleton was there attending one or two evening meetings during the week. Indeed, it was shortly announced, that there were several persons anxious for their souls. Awakened by principles of curiosity, some of the young people of this place, concluded to go down and test the verity of

these reports. The evening fixed upon was Friday, June 21; and a number, at an early hour, repaired to the house of worship in Somers. To their astonishment, they found a crowded audience, and awful solemnity pervading it. The subject of humble submission to Christ, was effectually enforced. To some of these visitors, it proved to be a word in season. One young person was in such deep anxiety, as to be unable to return, and therefore, tarried in one of the families in the neighborhood. The next day she expressed a hope of having passed from death to life. This, together with other circumstances, awakened with Mr. Nettleton an interest in the people of South Wilbraham, which I may safely add, was by many, heartily reciprocated. Express invitations were, at this time, as well as previously, forwarded by the minister and individuals of this people, urging Mr. Nettleton to visit South Wilbraham.

"Tuesday, 25. Mr. Nettleton this afternoon, for the first time, consented to have an appointment made for him in the village hall at South Wilbraham, at sun-set.

"This appointment, though of few hours previous notice, like an electric shock, reached every extremity of the society. At the set time, the hall was literally crowded, and multitudes yet assembling. Mr. Nettleton took his station, from which, in the hall, little else was to be seen than a dense surface of expressive countenances; and at the same time, from the windows might be seen trees and roofs of adjacent buildings, occupied by anxious hearers. Subject—Ground of alarm to awakened sinners. Many were awakened to anxiety this evening. During this and several succeeding weeks he labored alternately in South Wilbraham and Somers.

"July 9. At the close of public services this evening, several of our most interesting youth were deeply affected with a sense of their situation as sinners. One young female, who had sacrificed many of the evenings of the winter past in the ball-room, and who highly valued her excellency in

that amusement, was this evening overwhelmed with a sense of her guilt. As she dwelt some distance from the village, she was invited by one of her companions residing near, to spend the night with her. At the midnight hour, a request was sent to Mr. Nettleton to repair to this house. It was thronged with spectators to the scene of distress there exhibited. He found this young female sustained in the arms of her friends, and in a piteous and doleful tone, repeatedly exclaiming, 'Lord Jesus, have mercy on my soul.' The next day, while in a circle of young persons with whom Mr. Nettleton was conversing, she with one or two others, expressed joy and peace in believing.

"Thursday, 11. This afternoon Mr. Nettleton met sixty or eighty in an anxious meeting—an awful scene of distress. From this we repaired to the church, where he addressed us on the danger of grieving the Spirit of God. It was indeed a heart-searching subject. The sighs and sobs of anxious sinners were to be heard from every part of the house. When the speaker dismissed his audience, a large number rushed toward him, as if expecting assistance from an arm of flesh. In this situation, Mr. Nettleton addressed them about five minutes, and requested them to retire as silently as possible. Some individuals were so overwhelmed with a sense of eternal realities, that it became necessary to urge, and even assist them home.

"The whole number expressing hope at this time, is about one hundred.* Sixty-five are propounded as candidates for admission to the church on the first Sabbath of October next.

"This revival has extended its influence to many of the adjacent towns. In Somers and Tolland, there are two hundred and fifty subjects, hopefully."

At the close of the foregoing account, mention is made of Tolland. Here Mr. Nettleton labored considerably and with great success, in the months of August and September.

* This account is dated Sept. 25, 1822.

The following extract of a letter written by him, November 27, 1823, shows that this revival became very extensive in the eastern part of Connecticut.

"The revival of religion in the eastern part of the State of Connecticut, has, perhaps, never been more interesting, than within a few weeks past. I propose to give you the outlines of this work, from the commencement, down to the present. It has heretofore been a common remark among christians, that revivals have been much less frequent, and less powerful in the eastern, than in the western part of this state. Most of these churches, in years past, have been favored with seasons more or less reviving, but never with such a general and powerful refreshing from the presence of the Lord. This work commenced in Somers, June, 1822; and has continued increasing and spreading like fire, from house to house, and from heart to heart, with more or less power and rapidity, until the present moment. The following towns are contiguous, and have shared in one extensive revival.

"In Somers, one hundred and fifty have hopefully been made the subjects of divine grace. In South Wilbraham, one hundred. In Tolland, one hundred and thirty. In North Coventy, one hundred and twenty. In South Coventry, North Mansfield, and South Mansfield, about one hundred in each. In Columbia, forty. In Lebanon, ninety. In Goshen, thirty. In Bozrah, between sixty and seventy. In Montville, ninety. In Chaplin, fifty. The work has recently commenced, and is advancing with power in Hampton, and within a few weeks, fifty or more are rejoicing in hope. Within a few weeks past, the Spirit of God has descended with overwhelming power in Millington, and Colchester. In the former place, about seventy, and in the latter, sixty are already rejoicing in hope. They have never before witnessed the like, in rapidity, power, and extent. In the above cluster of towns, all contiguous, more than thirteen hundred souls have hopefully experienced a saving change, in the Congregational churches,

since the commencement of this revival; and of these more than eight hundred have already made a profession of religion.

"In Chatham, also, the work is interesting; about seventy are rejoicing in hope, and fifty or more have made a public profession. In Hampton, Colchester and Millington, many are now anxious for their souls, and inquiring, *what must we do to be saved?*

"New instances of conviction, and of hopeful conversion, are daily occurring in these towns. The prospect of the continuance and spread of this work, is as favorable now, as at any period, if not more so. The Lord hath done great things for Zion, whereof we are glad, and let all her friends humbly rejoice, and bow and give thanks and exalt his name together."

CHAPTER IX.

Sickness at Bolton—Compilation of Hymn Book—Labors in Bethlehem, Brooklyn, Taunton, Jamaica, Albany, Durham, Lexington, Virginia, Monson, North Carolina, Newark, New York—Voyage to England—Labors in Enfield—Formation of the Pastoral Union—Establishment of the Theological Institute of Connecticut—Appointment as professor—The degree of D. D. conferred upon him.

For ten or eleven years, Mr. Nettleton had been laboring almost constantly in revivals of religion. During this time, he preached, generally, three sermons on the Sabbath, and several during the week, besides spending much time in visiting from house to house, and conversing with individuals on the concerns of their souls. How he could endure such accumulated labors, was a mystery to many. Undoubtedly his constitution was so impaired by these labors, as to render it impossible to recover from the shock of disease by which he was attacked in 1822. It pleased God in the fall of that year, to arrest his labors, and to lay him on a bed of sickness.

It appears from a memorandum among his papers, that on Oct. 5th, 1822, he visited a sick person, in South Wilbraham, before breakfast, and took the typhus fever. He was sick at Bolton, at the house of his friend, Mr. Parmele. He was brought so low that his life was despaired of, both by himself and by his friends. His mind was composed and peaceful. As he afterwards remarked, the scenes of the revivals in which he had been engaged, and the countenances of the young converts, were constantly before him; and the hymns and tunes in which he had been greatly interested, were running in his mind; particularly those words:

"Soon shall I pass the gloomy vale,
Soon all my mortal powers must fail,
O, may my last expiring breath,
His loving-kindness sing in death."

From this sickness, he never entirely recovered. He was never after able to engage in arduous labor.

While in a very feeble state at Bolton, he received many letters from brethren at a distance, containing urgent requests that he would come and assist them. This induced the Rev. Mr. Calhoun, of Coventry, to publish the following note in the Religious Intelligencer, for April 5th, 1823.

"Mr. Whiting—I am requested, through the medium of your paper, to state to the religious public, that the Rev. Asahel Nettleton remains at Bolton, laboring under those bodily infirmities, which render him incapable of engaging in the active duties of his profession. The prospect of his speedy recovery is not favorable. And it is satisfactorily ascertained that he experiences essential injury from the numerous and pressing requests for his assistance, which he receives from different places. The christian friends of Mr. Nettleton, it is believed, would confer a favor on him, and would consult the best interests of the church, to suspend their communications for the present, and suffer him to remain undisturbed in his retired situation. Yours,

GEORGE A. CALHOUN."

While Mr. Nettleton was sick at Bolton, his friend Mr. Parmele took the fever of him and died. Mrs. Parmele was also very sick. An interesting obituary notice of Mr. Parmele, written by Mr. Nettleton, was published in the 7th volume of the Religious Intelligencer.

The following letter, written by Mr. Nettleton to a number of young converts in Wilbraham, will be read with interest.

"BOLTON, March 4th, 1823.

"*My very dear Friends.*—Some time in December last, I received a very affectionate letter, signed by fourteen names,

never to be forgotten. It contained a friendly invitation to me to go to Wilbraham, as soon as able, and there receive the kind offices of christian friendship. As I read the letter, and dwelt with delight on each name, the interesting scenes through which we had passed together, rushed full on my view. Had it been possible, most gladly would I have accepted your invitation; and I should almost esteem it a privilege to be sick, if surrounded by such a circle of friends.

"A few days since, I received another token of friendship, enclosed in a letter from one of the number of that same circle. You will please to accept my sincere thanks for this, and all your former acts of kindness.

"I need not inform you, my dear friends, of the trying scenes through which I have been called to pass since my last visit in Wilbraham. But our mercies are greater than our afflictions. Never did I experience so much kindness from friends as during my late sickness. I have often thought that their kindness has contributed much towards my restoration. It certainly contributed much to the health of my mind, by its cheering consolation. My spirits were better than they have formerly been, while in usual health. I have somewhere seen an expression like this—'The sympathy of friends in affliction, charms away half the wo.' This I have found to be true by experience. But the most trying of all, was my parting with our friend, Mr. Parmele. Born the same year—in the same town—anxious for his soul, and having made a profession of religion at the same time with myself, he was my nearest friend. Often have we met, and prayed, and wept, and rejoiced together in revivals of religion.

"I hope you will not forget the interesting scenes of last summer. I think I shall not. Revivals appear the most important on a sick and dying bed. And thither we are rapidly hastening. I wish I had strength to tell you my views and feelings since I read your last. During my deepest distress, I was in the midst of revivals. The tune, 'Loving Kindness,'

ran sweetly through my mind again and again, thousands of times, connected with the two last verses of the eighth hymn. This I often mentioned to my friends, as also the 324th hymn.* I do not recover my health as fast as my friends have been expecting. I have not strength to answer all the kind letters I receive from my friends. It is with difficulty that I have written this. My love to all my dear friends, and tell them how much I long to see them.

"Mr S —— is now preaching in Coventry. He calls frequently to see me, and we talk over the scenes of last summer with peculiar delight. The revival which commenced in your region last summer, is still spreading, and advancing with power in Coventry, both societies. Let us not forget to pray that it may continue. And now I entreat you all *to live near to God. Love one another. Live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.*

"I am ever yours in the best bonds."

For two years, Mr. Nettleton very rarely preached. During this period, he took a voyage to Machias, Me., and a journey to Montreal. The following letter was written to Mrs. Parmele, soon after his return from Canada. It is dated Greenwich, Conn., Aug. 27th, 1824.

"My Dear Friend—Yours of the 17th inst. I found at New York, on my return from my long journey. I accept of the kindness, but *my conscience will not allow me to retain the enclosed.* I have nothing special to communicate. I suppose brother King informed you of my journey to Montreal. It is more than 400 miles from New York. I went in company with Dr. McAuley and others. On our return we came by Saratoga Springs. I was quite sick, and by the advice of friends, I was persuaded to remain there a fortnight, during which time I recruited in some measure. I came to New York in the steamboat last Saturday. I am now thirty miles

* He probably here refers to the Hartford Collection of Hymns.

this side of the city, at the house of the Rev. Mr. Lewis, where I have been two nights. I may tarry here two or three days longer, and then hope to go to Hartford. I do not preach. You must pardon me for the brevity and poverty of this letter, for it still pains me to write. There is an interesting revival in Salem, Ms.; but nothing special in this region. I attended the funeral of brother Whelpley while in New York. *The time is short.* I exceedingly regret the loss of so much precious time. If your health will permit, I trust you will be diligently employed in doing good. If I were not so idle myself, I would tell you that it is good to be busily employed about something.

"In haste—Yours as ever."

Before he was taken sick, Mr. Nettleton had formed the purpose of compiling a hymn book; and had done something towards collecting the materials. As soon as he had so far recovered from his sickness, as to be able to read and write a little, he entered on this work. He finished it in the early part of 1824.

The reasons which induced him to undertake this work, are thus stated in his preface:

"With great satisfaction and pleasure have I often heard the friends of the Redeemer express their unqualified attachment to the sacred poetry of Dr. Watts. Most cordially do I unite with them in the hope, that no selection of hymns which has ever yet appeared, may be suffered to take the place of his inimitable productions.

"Deficiencies, however, he unquestionably has. Numerous have been the attempts to supply them; but hitherto, the judicious have been constrained to regret that these attempts have succeeded only in part. Whether the book, here published, will add something to that supply, is submitted to the decision of the religious community.

"The compiler does not overlook the valuable labors of those who have preceded him in this department; while he

concurs in the opinion, very generally adopted by his brethren in the ministry, that the various benevolent operations, and especially the prevalence of revivals, which are so characteristic of the present day, demand a new selection of Hymns.

"In the year 1820, the General Association of Connecticut appointed a committee to devise measures for the prosperity of religion within their limits. I well remember that at a meeting of that committee, the first item proposed was a new selection of Hymns. Four years, nearly, have elapsed, and nothing has been done pursuant to their appointment.

"When in the providence of God, I had the happiness of spending a short season, as a laborer for Christ, within the limits of the Albany Presbytery, the call for such a work in that region, and, as I learned from the most respectable sources, very extensively in the west and south, was not less imperious and pressing, than in the districts where I had been more particularly conversant. In personal experience, and discoveries of this description, originated the resolution to undertake the work. The compilation here presented is the result. The task has occupied my attention much of the time for nearly two years. Especially has it cheered and comforted me, during the long continued retirement to which a severe sickness subjected me.

"The book, whatever may be its defects, is now most affectionately presented

'To Zion's friends, and mine.'"

The Village Hymns have had a very extensive circulation, and have, it is believed, been instrumental of great good.

Mr. Nettleton, as has already been observed, was never able, after his sickness, to engage in arduous labor. For the first two years he rarely preached at all. After that, he was not able to preach constantly—sometimes only once on the Sabbath—sometimes twice, without attending many extra meetings, or devoting much time to visiting from house to

house. Still he was able to do something for the church, and his labors, in not a few instances, were accompanied with a divine blessing.

In the autumn of 1824, an interesting revival commenced under his preaching in Bethlem. He continued in this place, assisting the pastor, the Rev. Mr Langdon, who was sick, until his strength failed, and he was obliged to suspend his labors.

In a letter to Mrs. Parmele, of Bolton, dated New York, April 18th, 1825, he says, "The occasion of my first visit to Bethlem, was to see brother Langdon who was sick, and who had not preached for six months. He was thinking about asking a dismission when I arrived; but he postponed it. I preached for him two or three months. As many as eighty persons assembled at his house occasionally, at a meeting of inquiry, of whom about forty are rejoicing in hope. The burden of anxiety on my mind became so great that I could endure it no longer, and so I left them. Having some business which could be done in this city better than any where else, I accepted an invitation to spend the winter and spring here in retirement. I am so much retired, that my friends here say, I will not visit, nor be visited; and yet I have spent three-fourths of my time and strength in receiving visits."

In the spring of 1825, he preached considerably and with success, in Brooklyn, L. I.

In the summer of 1825, he preached in Taunton, Ms. Here his labors were made effectual to the conviction and conversion of sinners. The parish in which he preached, was at that time destitute of a pastor.

In the fall of the same year, he commenced laboring with the Rev. Mr. Cobb, in another parish in Taunton. In a letter to a friend, dated Taunton, Dec. 26th, 1825, he says:

"The state of things in this society has become quite interesting of late. Meetings are crowded and solemn as eternity. A number have called to see us in deep distress of

soul. Some of them told us that they received their first impressions down at the green last summer. The fire was already kindled, and has recently burst into a flame in this part of the town. The number of inhabitants in this society, is comparatively small; and yet, last Saturday evening, we met about sixty in the meeting of inquiry. About thirty are rejoicing in hope. Of these, some are youth of the first respectability, and four or five men of influence. Old professors of religion tell us they never saw such a time before."

The following statement of Mr. Cobb will be read with interest:

"Brother Nettleton came to Taunton in the summer of 1825, and the Trinitarian church in this town being destitute, by the decease of their beloved pastor, the Rev. Chester Isham, he labored two months and a half in that congregation. The prospect of a general and powerful revival of religion was very fair. About thirty converts were the fruit of his labors among that people. In this state of things, a candidate for settlement was procured, who subsequently became their pastor. Brother Nettleton retired, and came to live in my family the first of October, and continued with me till the middle of January, 1826.

"There had for weeks previous been a solemn stillness in my congregation, and many had been specially awakened, though they had kept their impressions to themselves. When brother Nettleton commenced his labors, the revival immediately became manifest, and converts were multiplied almost daily during his stay.

"His sermons were clear, sound, able, full of thought, direct and simple, with unity of design. 'He seemed to be destined to be understood.' He enlisted the hearts and hands of all the church, and especially the aged members—our fathers who were well informed, and who had borne the burden and heat of the day. It was surprising to see what overpowering influence his kindness, devotion and faithfulness had

upon all, old and young, saints and sinners. In this state of things, there seemed to be a very bright prospect of a glorious harvest. It was manifest that brother Nettleton had ready access to every conscience. As the revival progressed, he preached more and more closely and doctrinally. 'The great truths of the gospel,' were the weapons of his warfare, and were wielded with a spirit and an energy, which the people were unable to gainsay or resist. He was remarkably clear and forcible in his illustrations of the sinner's total depravity, and his utter inability to procure salvation by unregenerate works, or any *desperate efforts*. He showed the sinner that his unregenerate prayers for a new heart, his impenitent seeking, striving and knocking would be of no avail; and that absolute, unconditional submission to a sovereign God, was the first thing to be done. To this duty the sinner was urged immediately with great power and conclusiveness of argument.

"His visits among the people were frequent, but short and profitable. He entered immediately on the subject of the salvation of the soul, and the great importance of attending to it without delay. He did not customarily propound questions, and require answers, lest by this means he should turn the attention of sinners from their own wretched state, by leading them to think 'how they should reply to the minister.' He was so well acquainted with the human heart, that he seemed to have an intuitive perception of what was passing in the minds of those whom he was addressing. Thus he could so direct his conversation as to produce silence and self-condemnation, and confine their thoughts to their own lost and ruined state, sometimes remarking, 'You have no time to spend in conversation, before the salvation of the soul is secured.'

"When any indulged a hope which was not satisfactory, he would say, 'you had better give it up, and seek your salvation in earnest.' Well versed in all the doctrinal and experimental parts of the gospel; feeling deeply in his own

heart the power of divine truth, he was qualified, beyond most, to judge of the character of others' experience; and though mild and conciliatory in his manner, he was faithful in his warnings against false hopes and spurious conversions. All selfish considerations in the concerns of the soul he discarded; and he never used any art or cunning to entrap, or produce commitment on the part of sinners. In the anxious circle he was short, direct in his remarks, concluding with a short and fervent prayer; directing his petitions solely to God, and not displaying eloquence, or seeking to fascinate the congregation. He seemed to lose sight of man, and to be absorbed in a sense of the divine presence.

"In his intercourse with the people, he invariably produced favorable impressions on their minds in regard to their own pastor. He was not the *leader*, but only an *assistant* in the work. My people never before entertained and cherished so high, and so affectionate a regard for their pastor, as in this revival; and when he left us in the midst of it, such was the effect of his course in this respect, there was scarcely a word of inquiry respecting brother Nettleton, and the work went on as though he were with us.

"In his daily habits in my family, he was constantly employed in searching the scriptures, or in conversation on religious topics—discussing doctrinal points, or matters relating to christian experience. He was in this way very social, and an exceedingly agreeable companion.

"In his sermons, of which I heard sixty, he was, in manner, simple. He spoke with a clear voice—rather slow and hesitating at first, but gradually rising, till before the close, it was like a mighty torrent bearing down all before it. His eloquence was peculiar to himself, and consisted in conveying his own views and feelings to the minds of others. He never failed to impress his own ideas upon his hearers. As the revival became more interesting and powerful, he preached more doctrinally. He brought from his treasure the

doctrines of total depravity, personal election, reprobation, the sovereignty of divine grace, and the universal government of God in working all things after the counsel of his own will. And these great doctrines did not *paralyze*, but greatly *promoted* the good work. Never had brother Nettleton such power over my congregation, as when he poured forth, in torrents, these awful truths. And at no time were converts multiplied so rapidly, and convictions and distress so deep, as when these doctrines were pressed home to the conscience. One evening, while our house of worship was filled to overflowing, he preached on the doctrine of election, and the people were so held by the power of truth, that when in the midst of the sermon, an intoxicated Universalist stepped within the door, and cried out with a stentorian voice, and with a horrid oath, 'that's a lie,' scarcely an eye was turned from the speaker towards the door.

"The above remarks will serve to give a general idea of the character of this revival. The work was still, and after the lapse of nineteen years, we are satisfied that the converts were generally, truly renewed in the spirit of their minds. They appear still to believe and love the doctrines of grace by which they were begotten to the hope of the gospel; and they have walked in newness of life.

"The influence which that precious revival exerted upon the church and society, has been good; and men who were not subjects of it, have been confirmed in their belief of the truth; and their convictions that revivals may be evidently the work of God, have been deep and lasting; and they speak of that season as a day of divine power and grace."

The following letter to Mr. Cobb, written by Mr. Nettleton soon after he left Taunton, will show how deeply his own feelings were enlisted in the work of grace, above described. It is dated New York, Feb. 6, 1826.

"My dear brother:—Yours of the 30th ult. was received last Friday. It was truly refreshing to me, and to many of

my friends. I cannot express the joy I felt on hearing the number and the names of some who entertained hope since you wrote last. The young converts and the anxious ones have scarcely been out of my mind since I left Taunton. Your letter contains more than I had reason to expect, but my mind will not rest satisfied without possessing the names of *all* who have found the Saviour. When I left you, brother Cobb, I did not feel confident the work would continue; but I did not think it would be so rapid. The family where I reside, have become so interested in the state of things with you, that they occasionally mention you and your people in their prayers. I think you will do well to note facts and dates as you pass along. You will find them useful hereafter. You will prepare an account for the Connecticut Observer, or some other paper, ere long. My heart has been with you ever since I left, and I was really in hopes of making you a short visit, at least. But I am sorry to say, I have been very sick with a fever, and for twelve hours, considered dangerous. I am surrounded with kind friends, and have every thing I could wish. I feel much better to-day, or I should not be able to write. The physician says, it will take some time for me to recover. I do hope you will give me some account from week to week of the state of things with you. I fear I shall not be able to labor any where during the two following months of inclement weather. If you cannot obtain help, and are unwell yourself, get together, if you only say *five words*, and pray five minutes. Meet the anxious once a week, if you can only pray with them. Give my love to all the young converts, and to all the anxious. Tell the latter, that I have not forgotten them—that they have scarcely been out of my mind since I saw them in the circle. They must never drop the subject. They will never have another such opportunity."

On the 17th of March, a little more than a month after the

date of the foregoing letter, he wrote again to Mr. Cobb, as follows:

"My dear brother—The lapse of time does by no means lessen the interest which I have felt in forming an acquaintance with yourself, and family, and the people of your charge. Not a day, or a night has passed, since I parted with you, when those interesting scenes in which we mutually shared, of *sorrows and joys that are past*, have not been fresh in my mind. Brother, these are scenes never to be forgotten. Other trifles may occupy our time and absorb the thought, and feelings of our heart for a season, and be forgotten, or remembered only with regret. But oh, the scenes through which you are now passing, will follow you down through the track of time, and are forgotten *never*. I sympathize with you in all the sorrows and joys inseparable from the duties of a faithful pastor, at such a season. Now, more than ever, will be realized the weight of your responsibility.

'T is not a cause of small import,
The pastor's care demands;
But what might fill an angel's heart,
It fill'd a Saviour's hands.'

"I was pleased with the solemn stillness, the readiness to act, the apparent interest, and the decision of the members of your church. Were I present, I would affectionately say to them—be humble—be thankful for what God has already done—'keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace'—pray *much* and *fervently* for the continued outpouring of the Spirit—do not feel satisfied with what has already been done. Brethren, pray for us—for your pastor, that the word of God may continue to have free course and be glorified.

"I cannot forget that interesting circle which used to meet to consult on the great concerns of the soul. Often have I fancied myself seated in the midst of that same circle—some weeping—and some rejoicing in hope. Their countenances

are all familiar to my mind. With what feelings of affection and solemnity, and compassion, have I bowed together with you, my friends, around the throne of grace. While thus employed, often have I thought, shall we ever meet in heaven, around the throne of God and the Lamb? Shall we be companions forever, in that world of unclouded glory? The thoughts of such a meeting seem almost too much for such sinners as ourselves. But I know it is possible; and the vilest of sinners are *invited.* Some of the chief of sinners will repent, and be pardoned and saved; and why not such sinners as ourselves? Ah, none but sinners are saved, and some of the chief of sinners have already been saved. And I cannot but indulge the pleasing hope, that some—that many of your circle will meet in that world, where pilgrims meet to part no more. Let all those who indulge this heavenly hope themselves, come out from the world, and by their conduct and conversation, *declare plainly* that they seek a better country. You have yet to encounter the dangers of the wilderness, and you will need the whole armor of God. You who have long been companions in sin, will now become companions, helping one another on your way to the heavenly Zion.

'Invite the strangers all around,
Your pious march to join;
And spread the sentiments you feel,
Of faith and love divine.'

"I cannot forget those anxious souls, who are still out of Christ. With joy have I heard the tidings of many, whom I left anxious for their souls. But I have the names of a number now before me, of whom no such tidings have been told. Where are they? Have they gone back to the world? My dear friends, if you have not already given your hearts to Christ, once more, from this far distant region, would I lift up my voice, and warn you by the worth of your souls, to flee from the wrath to come. I entreat you not to rest till you

find rest in Christ. I have not forgotten you. I shall still remember you at the throne of grace, till the joyful tidings of your repentance have reached my ears; or the sorrowful tidings that you have dropped the subject of religion, and gone back to the world.

"Ever yours, in the best of bonds."

In 1826, although in very feeble health, God made him the instrument of a great work of divine grace in Jamaica, L. I. He commenced his labors in that town, on the 24th of February, and continued to labor there until November. The people, when he first came among them, were very much divided; but under his judicious management, their divisions were healed. He preached on Sabbath morning, and in the evening; omitting the usual afternoon exercise. And although he could not attend many extra meetings, or spend much time in visiting the people; yet there is reason to believe that God made him instrumental in the salvation of many souls.

In his journal, under date of May 8th, he speaks of fifty rejoicing in hope.

In a letter to his friend Mr. Cobb, of Taunton, dated July 13th, he says, "My head, heart and hands are so full, and health so feeble, that I have dispensed with every business, except what was absolutely indispensable. Since you left us, we have been much employed in listening to the relation of christian experience by the young converts, preparatory to a public profession of religion. For a few weeks past, we have attended to little else. Had you been present, you would have been interested, if not delighted. On the 2nd of July, we held our communion, and seventy-two were added by profession, and three by letter. The assembly was full, and very solemn. Eighteen were baptized. Since that day, the revival has received a new impulse. Many were awakened, who have since come out joyful. It has often been observed, that it seemed like the judgment day. We have

had but few meetings of inquiry since you left us. At our last, including young converts, there were about one hundred and forty. The work was never more interesting than at this time. A number of strangers from other towns have visited us, and have gone home rejoicing in hope, and others are in deep distress. If I continue long in this place, I think of appropriating one evening in the week to visiting a circle of strangers. You would be delighted with our assembly. We have long since been crowded out of our session house. Our meetings are now generally held in the church. Many professors, as well as young converts, say, we never knew what there was in religion before. 'Old things are passed away, and all things are become new.' Although a great proportion of this population are still strangers to the power of religion, yet there is little or no apparent opposition. Many who are left, are struck with solemn awe, and for their own credit, are constrained to plead the cause of God. '*Then said they among the heathen, the Lord hath done great things for them.*'

"I have by no means forgotten the young disciples in Taunton, nor those I left anxious for their souls. How I do long to see you, and all my friends in Taunton once more. I can only say, '*Let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ, that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.*'

"Yours in the bonds of the Gospel."

The following statement has appeared in the New York Observer, since the publication of the first edition of the memoir. As it strikingly illustrates Dr. Nettleton's manner of dealing with sinners in different states of mind, it is deemed worthy of being preserved.

"In perusing the life of Mr. Nettleton, I have had brought vividly to my recollection, scenes and circumstances connected with the revival of religion in Jamaica in 1826, of

deep interest to me, and although more than eighteen years have passed, their interest is as deep as ever, and I think, strikingly illustrates the wisdom and the prudence of that truly wonderful man in dealing with awakened sinners.

"The first time I ever saw Mr. Nettleton was on a communion Sabbath in the early part of the winter of 1826. Two strangers entered the church, and, walking slowly up the aisle, seated themselves in the front pew. Many eyes were fastened upon them; and after service, as is common in the country, many inquiries were made as to who they were, for they were evidently clergymen. It was some time, before I learned that one of them was the 'Rev. Mr. *Nettleton*, the great revival preacher.' The church in Jamaica, as is mentioned in the memoir, had been greatly divided. We were literally two bands hostile to each other, and bitter in feeling. The Apostle might have said of us, we were hateful, and hating one another; and there seemed but little prospect of our ever being any better. It was but a sad spectacle on that day presented to this man of God.

When, a few days after, I heard that Mr. Nettleton, the revival preacher, was soon going to preach for us, I never shall forget my feelings. I determined I would not hear him, and especially so, when an old disciple, long since in glory, Mr. Othniel Smith, who had listened with rapture to George Whitefield seventy years before, when he preached in Jamaica, said to me—'This Mr. Nettleton that is going to preach for us is a most wonderful man; he is said to be the greatest preacher that has been among us since the days of George Whitefield.' He said further, that, from what he had heard of him, he believed he could almost *read a man's heart*, so wonderful was his knowledge of human nature. I well remember I secretly said, 'He shall not see *my heart*, for I will not let him see me, so bitterly did I dread any thing like close, experimental preaching.

'I had long been a professor of religion, having united with

the Rutgers street church in 1812, while Dr. Milledollar was the pastor, and notwithstanding I had always been outwardly consistent, (regularly observing secret and family prayer, constant in my attendance upon all the meetings of the church, as well the public services of the Sabbath, as the weekly lecture, and the social circle for prayer, and active in all the benevolent operations of the day,) notwithstanding all this seeming consistency of character, there was always a fearful whisper from the faithful monitor within, that all was not right. There was a secret dread of self-examination, an unwillingness to know the worst respecting my case, and the idea of coming in contact with a man who would be likely to expose my shallowness, if not hypocrisy, I could not endure. And accordingly I resolved that something should detain me from church when Mr. Nettleton preached. But although I sought diligently for any excuse, one even the least plausible, yet I could not find one; and, contrary to my secret determination, I went to church at the appropriate time with my family.

"After the Sabbath, numbers of the church members called upon Mr. Nettleton at his lodgings, to welcome him among us; and I was repeatedly requested to do so with the rest: but day after day I contrived to excuse myself, although I knew it was a civility that was expected of me. At length a brother, who had often urged me to go, called upon me to know if I would not take Mr. Nettleton a little ride in my gig, as he was in feeble health, having but just recovered from a protracted illness, adding that he found riding not only beneficial, but necessary, and he knew I could do it just as well as not.

"I never shall forget my feelings at this proposition. I at first refused outright, and was vexed that the proposition should have been made. I treated the brother rudely. He however continued to urge, and said he had gone so far as to tell Mr. Nettleton he knew I would do it cheerfully. But it was all to no purpose. I did not do it that day, but consented to call

upon him the next morning, with my gig, at ten o'clock, if he would be ready. The next morning accordingly I called at the appointed time, and was introduced to him on the side-walk; and never did culprit dread the face of his judge more than I dreaded to be brought face to face with a man who, it was said could almost *read the heart.*

"I received him politely, and we soon entered into a pleasant conversation, about almost any thing and every thing except personal religion. This I scrupulously avoided. I found he was in feeble health, and somewhat given to hypochondria; therefore I felt assured I could entertain him by talking about his own ailments. In less than one hour all my unpleasant feelings had vanished, and I felt as free and easy with him, as if I was riding with some long tried friend; and that which I so much dreaded became to me at once a source of great pleasure and of much profit.

"The first day he rode with me about six miles; and after that, for seven months, very few pleasant days passed, that we did not ride together from five to twenty-five miles. I became deeply interested in him as a man and as a preacher. Why I at first liked his preaching I cannot exactly say; but I was unwilling to be absent from a single meeting. The class of subjects he chose as his theme of discourse was new. The distracted state of the congregation led those clergymen who supplied our pulpit to select some subject connected with christian duty. Brotherly love, if I remember right, was the subject of discourse seven times in about three months. On the contrary, Mr. Nettleton presented the claims of God and the *duty of sinners*, and here I remember we had no opportunity of scrutinizing the sermon, to endeavor to ascertain on which side of the division the preacher was. This I considered a master stroke of policy.

"Thus smoothly and pleasantly, comparatively speaking, it passed along with me for about two weeks, when one evening he announced from the desk that he felt some encouragement

to believe that the Lord was about to grant us a blessing. He said he had seen several individuals who were anxious for their souls, and two or three who indulged hope. How it would end with them he could not say, but he wanted the church to walk softly before the Lord, to be much in prayer, &c., &c. I felt then that my own case required looking into at once, or I was lost; and I resolved soon to attend to it, nor to let the present opportunity pass. Mr. Nettleton had never yet said one word to me on the subject of experimental religion, although I had been with him a great deal.

"The next day, as usual, I called for him to ride. I was obliged to go to Flushing that day, distant about five miles. Just as we were ascending the hill, a little out of the village, and before any subject of conversation had been introduced, and the horse on a slow walk, he gently placed his hand upon my knee and said—'Well, my dear friend, how is it with you? I hope it is all peace within.' I could not speak for some minutes. He said no more, and there was no occasion, for an arrow had pierced my inmost soul. My emotion was overwhelming. At length, after recovering a little self-possession, I broke the silence by telling him frankly I was not happy—there was no peace within—all was war! war!! war!!! His manner was so kind, he instantly won my confidence, and I unburdened my soul to him. I told him how I had felt for years past, and how very unhappy at times I had been.

"He did not seem inclined to talk. All he said was occasionally 'Well—well—well'—with his peculiar cadence. At length he said he did not feel very well, and he wanted to be still. This was a request he often made, and I thought nothing of it. I have rode miles and miles with him, and not a word has passed between us after such a request.

"I continued to ride with him once and twice a day; but although I was anxious to converse, he said but little to me, except occasionally he would drop a remark calculated to make me feel worse instead of better—at times greatly deep-

ening my distress. Some months afterwards, I spoke to him about this part of our intercourse. He said he did it intentionally, for he had reason to believe many an awakened sinner had his convictions all talked away, and he talked into a false hope.

"'Two or three days after he first spoke to me on the subject of religion, he called at my house, and requested me to go and see a particular individual, whom he named and who was under distress of mind, and pray with her. I told him that I could not do such a thing as that, for I was not a christian, myself. He replied—'But you do not mean that your not being a christian releases you from christian obligations? If you do you are greatly in error. Good morning!' and he left me rather abruptly. In the afternoon, when I rode with him, he did not ask me if I attended to his request, for he knew I had not. He only made the request, as he afterwards told me, to thrust deeper the arrow of conviction; and it had the desired effect. My distress became very great, and I was unfitted for my ordinary duties. I felt as if there was but little hope for such a hardened sinner as I was.

"About this time he appointed a meeting of inquiry. I told him I should be there for one. He said I must not attend on any account—it was only intended for anxious sinners. I told him I certainly should be there, unless he absolutely forbade it. 'I do,' said he, with more than ordinary earnestness. Then,' said I, 'you must promise me that you will appoint a meeting for anxious professors.' He made no reply. This anxious meeting was the first he appointed in Jamaica. It was to be held at the house of a dear friend of mine, and one who knew something of the state of my mind. I went there in the afternoon, and made arrangements to be concealed in an adjoining bed-room, the door of which could not be shut, the bed being placed against it. I was on the ground an hour before the time appointed. Mr. Nettleton came soon after, to arrange the seats; about this he was very particular. He

came into the bed-room where I was concealed two or three times; he wanted the door closed, but he found it could not be without disarranging the furniture, and he gave it up. He did not know I was there until some weeks afterwards. The temptation to be present at that meeting I could not resist. Some how I had received an impression that my salvation depended upon it. I had heard so often about persons being converted in an anxious meeting, that I thought if I could only be present at such a meeting, that was all that was necessary, and therefore I was willing not only to run the risk of offending Mr. Nettleton, but willing to submit to almost any humiliating circumstance, to accomplish my object. I thought it was altogether a piece of cruelty in Mr. Nettleton to forbid my being present, and I determined to carry my point privately, if I could not openly.

"Situated as I was, I could hear next to nothing as to what was transpiring in the anxious room. Mr. Nettleton addressed those present individually, and in a very low tone of voice, bordering upon a whisper. As he approached the open door, I could occasionally catch a sentence, and hear a deep and anxious sob—but these words, and broken sentences, and sobs, were loud and pointed sermons to me. I wanted to get out from my hiding place, that I might give vent to my pent up feelings; and my anxiety to be released, appeared to be greater than it was to be present. At times, it seemed as if I must cry out in bitterness of spirit, so agonizing were my feelings; especially so as I heard him say to one individual, 'Is it possible? Well, I am afraid you will lose your impressions, and if you should what will become of you? If the Spirit is grieved to return no more, you *will* lose your soul.' After going around the room, and conversing with each individual, he made a few general remarks applicable to all respecting the danger of grieving God's Holy Spirit, and then dismissed the meeting after a short prayer.

"Instead of feeling any better after this meeting, as I ex-

pected to do, I felt worse and worse. Sleep was now taken from me, and I felt that death was better than life. Either that night or the next, I forget which, but remember it was the 27th April, I got out of bed about 12 o'clock, and went out into the woods. It was exceedingly dark. I fell down at the foot of a tree, and cried aloud for mercy in agony of soul. I felt that God was just in punishing me. I felt that the *longest* and the *severest* punishment he could inflict was no more than I deserved; my sins, my aggravated sins, appeared so great. I remained out of doors the most of the night. In the morning, early, before I went home, I called at Mr. Nettleton's lodgings. He sent word that he could not see me at that hour. I went away, and returned in an hour or so; he told the servant to request me to be seated, and he would be with me in a few minutes.

"Every minute now seemed an hour, and a long one too. For nearly thirty minutes he kept me in this state of horrible suspense, during which I was constantly pacing the floor with my watch in my hand. When at length he entered the room, I threw my arms round his neck, told him I was in perfect agony, and that I should die if he did not in some way comfort me. I told him it seemed as if I could not live another hour in such distress.

"*I* can't help you, my dear friend, you must not look to me;" and he burst into a flood of tears.

"What shall I do? what shall I do?" I repeated over and over again, in a loud voice.

"You must yield your heart to Christ, or you are lost!" said he; and adding, 'I do certainly think your situation a very alarming and dangerous one.'

"After a few minutes, he said, 'Come, let us kneel down.' This was contrary to his usual practice. He made a very short prayer, not more than a minute in length, rose from his knees, advised me to go home and remain in my room, and abruptly left me, almost overcome with emotion. Had there

been any means of self-destruction within my reach, I believe I should have employed it, so agonizing were my feelings. He sent word to me by a young friend, that he did not wish to ride that day. I passed the most of the day in my room on my knees. Occasionally, I walked for a few minutes in my garden, and then returned to my room. It was the *just* and the *eternal* displeasure of an *angry* God that seemed to crush me to the earth. About the middle of the afternoon, one of the elders came to see me. He expressed surprise at my distress, said there was no necessity for my feeling so bad, he knew there was not. He tried to persuade me it would all be well with me *soon*. I told him that if he could satisfy me that it would ever be well with me, I would gladly and cheerfully endure my sufferings thousands of years. This feeling I distinctly remember. The *justice* of God and the *eternity* of his anger distressed me most. I sent for Mr. Nettleton, but he excused himself, and did not come.

> "Thus every refuge failed me,
> And all my hopes were cross'd."

"It was past the middle of the afternoon, and approaching sundown, and I had not yet broken my fast. After a short walk in the garden, I again entered my room, locked the door, and threw myself prostrate on my settee, as near a state of hopeless despair as I can conceive a mortal to be on this side the bottomless pit. I cried aloud, 'O my God! how long—how long, O my God, my God.' After repeating this and similar language several times, I seemed to sink away into a state of insensibility. When I came to myself I was upon my knees, praying not for myself but for others. I felt submission to the will of God, willing that he should do with me as should seem good in his sight. My concern for myself seemed all lost in concern for others. *Terror* seemed all exchanged for *love*, and *despair* for *hope*. God was glorious, and Christ unspeakably precious. I was an overwhelming wonder to

myself. The cry of 'Blessed Jesus—blessed Jesus!' took the place of 'Lord have mercy.'

"After remaining in my room half an hour or thereabouts, I came down stairs, and met my dear wife, who had deeply sympathised with me in my distress. I exclaimed, 'I have found Him, I have found Him, and He is a precious Saviour!' She was very much overcome. She persuaded me to take some food, but I was so happy and so anxious to go to meeting, the bell having rung, that I could eat but little. I went over to the session house; it was crowded—benches in the aisle were filled. I obtained a seat near the door. Mr. Nettleton was reading the 211th hymn of the village collection—

> "Of all the joys we mortals know,
> Jesus, thy love exceeds the rest," &c.

I thought I never heard so sweet a hymn, nor so delightful music. I sung it at the top of my voice, of which however I was not aware, until I saw I had attracted the observation of all near me. My eyes were streaming with tears, while my countenance was beaming with delight, as a friend afterwards told me. I wanted to tell to all around what a Saviour I had found.

After service, I walked home with Mr. Nettleton, and remained with him a few minutes. 'I knew this morning,' said he, 'that the turning point was not far off.' He cautioned me again and again, against giving way to my feelings; urged me to keep humble and prayerful, and not say much to any one. That night I could not sleep for joy. I do not think I closed my eyes. I found myself singing several times in the night. In the morning all nature seemed in a new dress, and vocal with the praises of a God all glorious. Every thing seemed changed, and I could scarcely realize that one, only yesterday so wretched, was now so happy. I felt it perfectly reasonable that he who had had much forgiven should love much. I think I sincerely inquired, 'Lord, what wilt thou

have me to do?' and though eighteen years have passed, God is still glorious, and Christ still precious to my soul; and unless I am greatly deceived, I still pray for a knowledge of my duty, and for grace to do it. I know that I still love to do good and make others happy; and of all anticipated delights which I can place before my mind, that of the enjoyment of sinless perfection in heaven is the greatest. But never was a sense of my unworthiness greater than it is at present.

What was there in me that could merit esteem
Or give the Creator delight?
'Twas 'even so, Father,' I ever must sing,
'Because it seem'd good in thy sight.'
Then give all the glory to his holy name,
To him all the glory belongs,
Be mine the high joy still to sound forth his fame,
And crown him in each of my songs."

T. W. B.

In November, 1826, he visited Albany, and remained there through most of the winter. While here, though very feeble, God made him the instrument of the hopeful conversion of not a few souls. He speaks in one of his letters of eighty rejoicing in hope. In a letter to the Rev. Mr. Aikin, of Utica, extracts from which will be inserted in a future chapter, he says, "Would that I had time and strength to give you particulars on the state of religion in this region, and elsewhere. In Albany it is interesting. I have met a number of circles of different kinds. Some are rejoicing in hope, and a number are anxious for their souls."

In the spring of 1827, he repaired to Durham, N. Y. While here, his bodily weakness was so great, as to lead him to apprehend that he was drawing near the close of life. The following letter, addressed to the Rev. Mr. Williston, the pastor of the church in Durham, will show the state of his mind at that time. As this letter is found among Mr. Nettleton's own papers, it may never have been delivered. It is dated Durham, April 21st, 1827.

"Brother Williston—This day I am 44 years old. I feel thankful that a kind providence has led me to this place, and that I have had the satisfaction of a short acquaintance with you. I cannot express my feelings now. But in view of the uncertainty of life, I would say, that I am happy in the thought of laying my bones in your burying ground. I cannot tell how it may be in the solemn hour of death—and a willingness to die, I do not think, is, in itself, any evidence of grace. But the thought of leaving the world, appears rather pleasant; and above all, the thought of never sinning. I feel it to be a *great thing* to be a christian. Such words as these appear sweet. 'I am now ready to be offered,' &c.

'O glorious hour!—O blest abode!
I shall be near and like my God;
And flesh and sin no more control
The sacred pleasures of the soul.'

"I feel a peculiar love to ministers—especially to those with whom I have labored in seasons of revival. Remember me affectionately to them all. They will find my feelings in the twentieth chapter of Acts. I feel a peculiar interest in theological students, and I have been wishing to leave something that would be useful—something which has been learned by experience. I would say to young men, it is a good symptom when they secure the confidence of aged and experienced ministers. The younger should submit themselves to the elder, and always speak kindly of them.

"My mind ranges over all the towns and places where I have labored in seasons of revival with peculiar delight. I have feelings of inexpressible tenderness and compassion, for all the young converts. They will find much of them in 1st and 2d Thessalonians. My affectionate regards to all my relatives in North Killingworth. Tell them to prepare to follow me. I die among kind friends. Tell your congregation, and especially the young people, to seek an interest in Christ without delay. When I am buried on yonder hill, tell them to remem-

ber the evening when I preached to them from these words, '*Seek first the kingdom of God.*' Whenever they pass my grave, tell them, they will each one remember, 'there lies the man who talked to me about my soul.' I die in peace with all mankind. In great weakness,

Your affectionate friend and brother,

A. N."

Notwithstanding his great weakness, while at Durham, his labors were attended by a divine blessing. God poured out his Spirit, and numbers were hopefully made the subjects of renewing grace.

In the summer of the same year, there was an interesting revival under his preaching at Lexington Heights, on the Catskill mountains. Between thirty and forty were, in the judgment of charity, called out of darkness into marvelous light.

While at Lexington, Mr. Nettleton wrote the following letter to Mr. Charles E. Furman, a member of the Theological Seminary at Auburn, now pastor of the church in Victor, N. Y.

"My Dear Friend:—When I saw that the captivity of Zion was turned, I retired out of the region of news and noise, among these mountains. The bear and the panther, the wolf and the wild-cat, it is said, are occasionally seen or heard ranging the forests which surround the village and the mansion where I now reside. The deer I have seen leaping the fence and the mound, with a hound close to his heels. I have often been reminded of these words, 'And he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.' When the apostles returned to Christ, and gave an account of their mission, he said unto them, 'come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile.' Every itinerant preacher, especially if he has been engaged in a revival of religion, must feel the need of this last direction; or suffer greatly, if

he long neglect it. I could not advise any one to be employed in a powerful revival more than three months, without retiring into solitude for a short time, to review the past, and to attend to his own heart. He will find much to lament, and much to correct; and it is by deep and solemn *reflection* upon the past, and by this only, that he can reap the advantages of past experience. It is not by passing through many revivals of religion, that we can gain any valuable experience on the subject. Many former, as well as some recent examples, prove the truth of this remark.

"The people where I reside, are destitute of a settled pastor. I have preached a number of times to a very crowded, silent, and solemn assembly. I have met a number in deep distress of soul: and recently some are rejoicing in hope, and begin to sing 'Redeeming Love.' We have a most excellent choir of youthful singers, some of whom are among the young converts. Last evening, I saw two of the most gay and thoughtless of them, who I feared were going to be left, and found them in awful distress. I had noticed that they did not sing in the choir on the Sabbath; though they are favored with the sweetest voices. On my visit, I found the reason might be given in the following beautiful lines:

'How can my soul exult for joy,
Which feels this load of sin;
And how can praise my tongue employ,
While darkness reigns within?
My soul forgets to use her wings,
My harp neglected lies,
For sin has broken all its strings,
And guilt shuts out my joys!'

"I have thought very seriously of requesting you to make us a visit, for I needed your help to write off tunes, and to aid in learning them. But my time here is so short that I could not request it. My health is feeble, though better than it was last summer. I have been advised by physicians to spend the winter at the South; and it is time to make my arrange-

ments. I wish to hear from you soon. What is the state of things in Auburn? My best regards to Dr. Richards and to all my friends.

Yours truly."

In the fall of 1827, he went to the South for the benefit of his health. He spent the winter in Virginia, and was made the instrument of a great work of divine grace. Dr. John H. Rice, in a letter to Dr. Alexander, thus speaks of his labors:

"When Mr. Nettleton had strength to labor, he soon was made instrumental in producing a considerable excitement. This has extended, and now the state of things is deeply interesting. Five lawyers, all of very considerable standing, have embraced religion. This has produced a mighty sensation in Charlotte, Mecklenburg, Nottaway, Cumberland, Powhattan, Buckingham, and Albemarle. The minds of men seem to stand a tiptoe, and they seem to be looking for some great thing." "Mr. Nettleton is a remarkable man, and chiefly, I think, remarkable for his power of producing a great excitement, without much *appearance* of feeling. The people do not either weep or talk away their impressions. The preacher chiefly addresses *Bible truth* to their *consciences*. I have not heard him utter, as yet, a single sentiment opposed to what you and I call orthodoxy. He preaches the Bible He derives his illustrations from the Bible."

Mr. Nettleton remained in Virginia, laboring in different parts of that State, as his health and strength would permit, and with no inconsiderable success, until the spring of 1829.

The following letter to his friend Mr. Cobb, will give some idea of his labors in Virginia, and their results:

"New York, Feb. 17, 1831.

"My Dear Brother:—Your very welcome letter of the 15th is just received. It awakened in my mind the most tender recollections of scenes that are past—the years of the right hand of the most High, never to be forgotten. I rejoice

to hear that the subjects of the last revival in your society so generally run well. My most affectionate regards to every one of them, and tell them how I should rejoice to see their faces once more in this world.

"Many things have transpired in my own history since I saw you last, and some deeply interesting. My turns of faintness increased until 1827, when the physicians despaired of my life; and as the last resort, I was advised to go to a Southern climate. For three winters I have been in the Southern States, and my health has wonderfully improved, so that I have been able to labor almost incessantly. The scene of the deepest interest was in the county of Prince Edward, Virginia, in the vicinity of the Union Theological Seminary, and Hampden Sydney College. Our first meeting of inquiry was at the house of Dr. Rice—the very mansion containing the Theological students. More than a hundred were present, inquiring 'What must we do to be saved?' Among the subjects of divine grace, were a number of lawyers, six or seven, and some of them among the leading advocates at the bar. Some were men of finished education, who are soon to become heralds of salvation.

"During my residence in Virginia, I took a tour across the Alleghany Mountains, about two hundred miles, to spend a short time during the warm season. On my way, I spent a few weeks at a place called Staunton, where I left a pleasant little circle of young converts. On a certain Sabbath, as we were almost destitute of singers, I noticed a female voice, which from its fullness, and sweetness, and wildness, all combined, attracted my attention. On arriving at my lodgings I inquired of a young lady whose voice it could be, and whether we could not catch and tame it, and enlist it in our service? The name, I was informed, was S—— L. Will you not invite her to call and see us? 'O, she is a very gay and thoughtless young lady; was never at our house, and we have no acquaintance with her.' Tell her from me that I wish to

see her—that I want the aid of her voice. N—— went out, and in a few moments returned with the interesting stranger, who sat down with a pleasing, pensive countenance, which seemed to say, now is my time to seek an interest in Christ. And so it was, that she and her sister, and fifteen or twenty others became deeply impressed, and soon became joyful in Christ. This little circle would call on me daily, linking hand in hand, and smiling through their tears, would sing Redeeming Love. I bade them farewell—and now for the sequel. I have received a letter from Dr. Wardell, the worthy physician of that place, at whose house I resided, from which I will give an extract. 'We have had several instances of death from typhus fever since you left us. The only individual whom you know, included in this number, was one of your *little circle*—S——L. It will be no less gratifying to you than it is to her friends here, to learn that she gave abundant evidence of the genuineness of the Christian profession. To go a little into detail. She had been complaining for several days, before she would consent to lie by; and did not call in medical aid for some days after her confinement. I first saw her six days from her first attack, when she was entirely prostrate. She said she believed she should not recover, nor had she any desire to live longer. So far from being dismayed at death, she seemed to view it as one of the most joyful events. I was in some perplexity to ascertain whether these were the feelings of a sound mind, and the vigorous exercise of faith; and closely watched for some *incoherences* which might settle the inquiry; but there was nothing of the kind. She was too weak to converse much, but had her friends summoned around her, to give them a word of exhortation; expressing a strong desire to be the means of leading one soul to heaven. She took great delight in gazing on those whom she had been accustomed to meet in your *little religious circle*, because she expected to meet them in heaven. She often spoke of you, and your little social meetings, prayed

for you, and said she should meet you in a larger circle in heaven than she had ever done in Staunton. In order to test the correctness of her apprehension, I asked her if she would feel no diffidence in being admitted into the presence of a holy God, and the holy beings who surround his throne? She had strength only to reply—But I am washed—I am washed! She lived fourteen days after I saw her first. I have been thus particular, because she requested that some one would inform you of her death.'

"You will pardon me for sending you this little story. It cannot touch your feelings as it does my own. You may read it to your young people as a token of affectionate remembrance from

"Their unworthy friend."

While Mr. Nettleton was in Virginia, he wrote the following letter to the Rev. Lavius Hyde; and although it contains but little respecting his labors, it will on other accounts, be read with interest. It will give the reader some idea of Mr. Nettleton's exquisite sensibility to the beauties of poetry.

"STAUNTON, Va., March 4, 1829.

"My Dear Brother—So many things have transpired since I left the North, that I am really at a loss how to begin my letter, or what to say. Indeed, I should not probably have sent you even this, had not the biography of our departed friend, Carlos Wilcox,* to my surprise, found its way over these mountains, into the interior of Virginia. I have read it with no common interest alone—also in company with a number of ministers and Christians, who were greatly delighted. Some part of it, I mean the poetic part, I have read frequently in a circle of young converts in this place. 'The Religion of Taste' has set them all weeping—especially from the 79th to the 91st verse inclusive. A few Sabbaths since, seventeen persons made a public profession of religion in this

* Mr. Hyde was the author of this biography.

place: and as they all stood in a single row, side by side, in front of the pulpit, while the minister was addressing them, they affectionately grasped each other by the hand. With wonderful adroitness, the minister seized this circumstance, and observed that he considered it as a signal of the union of their hearts. A few days after, while sitting in a circle, linking hand in hand, I read to them for the first time, 'The Religion of Taste.' When I came to the 87th verse, the effect I cannot describe. Others were present who were without hope, and anxious for their souls. And oh, you cannot imagine how solemn it was, when I came to these words:

'I only wandered on, with none to meet
And call me dear, while pointing to the past,
And forward to the joys that never reach their last,
I had not bound myself by any ties
To that blest land.'

"I do think this piece contains specimens of exquisite painting. The fourth verse I have often read to my friends as specimens. The 98th and 101st are favorites. How I should like to read and enjoy the whole of this, and Pollok with you and Mrs. Hyde. While reading the latter, how often has the thought crossed my mind, what would friend Carlos have said, had it made its appearance in his life time?

"I have no time to give you an outline of my own sorrows or joys.

'What matter whether pain or pleasure fill
The swelling heart, one little moment here.'

"Providence permitting, I start for Prince Edward within a few days, and hope to visit New England in the Spring. My best regards to all your family.

"Yours truly."

The following letter from a highly respectable clergyman in Virginia, was received too late to be inserted in the first edition of this memoir.

"CUMBERLAND Co. Va. July 17, 1844.

"Rev. and Dear Sir—I am pleased to learn by a notice in the papers, that you are engaged in preparing a biographical sketch of the late Rev. Dr. Nettleton. I received, a few days ago, a request from our friend, Rev. Michael Osborne, that I would furnish you with such information as I could, in reference to Dr. Nettleton's labors in Virginia, and the estimation in which those labors were held by christians here.

"It was my privilege while a young man in the ministry of the gospel, to share his confidence and his friendship, during his first visit to Virginia in 1828, and the beginning of '29, and I had on two occasions afterwards, an opportunity for intimate and most delightful intercourse with him. During the winter of 1828, he spent two weeks in my study at Buckingham C. H., to which place I had just been called as the pastor of the small Presbyterian church there, and which had enjoyed the privilege of his ministry for a few weeks during the summer of that year, with the manifest blessing of the Head of the church on his labors. He was then resting from the severe and exhausting labors which he had undergone during the summer and fall, at Hampden Sydney, Prince Edward Co., at Buckingham C. H., and in the valley of Virginia; and during those two weeks, I had the highly prized opportunity of full conversation with him about his views in theology, with the doctrinal history of which, he was uncommonly well acquainted; about the whole subject of revivals of religion; the proper manner of presenting divine truth to the understandings and consciences of men, in connection with a spirit of prayer, and a feeling and entire dependence on the Spirit and grace of God, to make the truth effectual; and plans for building up the kingdom of Christ. On all these subjects he was the most interesting and instructive individual with whom I have ever had intercourse; and on the subject of *revivals of religion*, incomparably the *wisest* man I ever saw. It was a subject which he had thoroughly studied

in the light of revelation and ecclesiastical history, and on which he had an amount of experience and observation probably beyond any man living. You will render most important service to the cause of Christ, if you succeed, as I trust you may, in getting before the public mind, a full exhibition of his views on this subject.

"He was introduced into Virginia by the Rev. Dr. John H. Rice, then Professor of Christian Theology in Union Theological Seminary, Prince Edward Co., and very soon began his labors with the Presbyterian church in the immediate vicinity of the Seminary, and Hampden Sydney College. The Spirit of God accompanied his exhibitions of divine truth, and soon a most interesting and precious revival of religion was enjoyed with the church there. He was deeply interested in this revival of religion, and so were many others, because of the number of educated gentlemen, especially lawyers of high standing and extensive influence, who were hopefully converted during this blessed season of divine influence. Not many gentlemen of this profession, had, up to this time, been members of any church in this section of country. Those referred to, were from several adjoining counties; and this circumstance attracted no little attention, and sent out an extensive and most salutary influence on the surrounding country; especially the county of Buckingham. This county, in execution of his ordinary plan of making the scene of a revival a center of influence for the surrounding country, he took an early opportunity to visit. He preached at the Court House for a few Sabbaths, to a small church which had been organized a few years before; and here his ministry excited great attention, and was accompanied with the special blessing of heaven. The revival at this place was not extensive, but it laid the foundation, as I had occasion to know, for building up quite a flourishing Presbyterian church in that region. I had on the ground an interesting opportunity to observe the practical effects of a genuine re-

vival of religion, conducted on true scriptural principles, as I began to minister to that community in the beginning of the winter of that year. The views of religion which he presented, were so scriptural, and rational, commending themselves to every man's conscience; and the sympathies of the community, in the midst of deep interest and intense feeling, were so wisely managed, avoiding every thing like extravagance and fanaticism, that the sober and well-balanced minds of *those without*, could find no occasion to object to any thing that was said or done. When Dr. Nettleton went away, the consciences of the people were left on the side of rational and intelligent piety. The young people, too, grew up under the impression that revivals of religion are blessed seasons; so that when another revival came, the obstacles in the way seemed to be small. That church has been emphatically one of revivals ever since, and has been mainly built up by them. The same impression, as I have had opportunity to know, was left on the public mind by the revival in Prince Edward Co., as indeed, it always will be, when a genuine revival of religion, properly conducted, is enjoyed.

"Towards the close of the summer of that year, Dr. Nettleton's health, which was quite feeble when he came to Virginia, rendered it proper as he thought, that he should visit the mountains, and the mineral springs located among them. He could not, however, during his excursion, debar himself the privilege of preaching the gospel. He labored for a few weeks, with the blessing of God, but not to the same extent as at Prince Edward, and Buckingham C. H., at Lewisburg, Greenbrier Co., and at Staunton, Augusta Co.

"These trips gave him an opportunity for extending his acquaintance and his influence with the clergy of Virginia, by whom he was every where received with the utmost cordiality and christian affection. The report of the blessing of God on his labors for Christ, which preceded him, opened the hearts of all our ministers and people towards him. You

doubtless had an opportunity to know how the cordiality and christian affection of his Virginia brethren affected him. On their part, I had many occasions to know, they regarded his visit to Virginia as a great blessing to our churches. I have always thought, that Dr. Nettleton's sojourn among us was worth more to the cause of Christ, from the influence which he exerted on the minds of ministers, than in any other point of view. He certainly exerted no little influence on the manner of preaching the gospel in this part of the state; but probably, yet greater good resulted from the interest which he excited on the subject of genuine revivals of religion. Our churches had been blessed with such seasons of refreshing before; but the subject had not been any thing like so well understood. The views which followed his visit, have powerfully influenced the minds of ministers and christians generally ever since; and their hallowed influence, we may reasonably hope, will go down upon the church for many years to come. He felt great interest in the students of our seminary, who were soon to be in the field of ministerial labor, and cordially co-operated with good Dr. Rice, in efforts to imbue them with the right spirit for the great work of preaching the gospel. I well knew how high a value Dr. Rice placed on his visit to the seminary, and on the opportunity which his young men enjoyed for witnessing his manner of presenting divine truth, and conducting things in a revival of religion. His interest on the subject of revivals was intense; and as he regarded them as the great means, in connexion with the pastoral office, in building up the kingdom of Christ and saving a lost world, he was most deeply solicitous that correct views on the subject should prevail. He took great pains in explaining his views to those whom he regarded as being judicious and *trusty;* and guarded with extreme caution against every thing wild and fanatical. He had abundant reason to be deeply solicitous on this subject, as individuals at the North, and especially in western New York,

had run revivals into extravagance, and then, as he said, attempted to plead the authority of his name and example for their ultra and extravagant proceedings. I never saw him so deeply excited on any subject, as in conversation about these abuses. His *measures*—if it be proper thus to characterize the means which he used in connexion with revivals of religion, were new in this region, and excited great interest. The fact, however, was, that there was nothing new about his plans, except that he brought people together who were concerned about their soul and had made up their minds to attend at once to the subject of religion, into a general *inquiry meeting*, and sometimes into smaller meetings of the same kind in private houses, in the more distant parts of a congregation—for the purpose of personal conversation and instruction adapted to the peculiar cases of individuals. At these meetings, young converts were kept with those who were anxious. These plans were suggested by common sense and the necessity of the case, and were approved by the most judicious ministers amongst us. Some, however, were disposed, as had been done elsewhere, to try to improve on his simple plans, and as he knew that *imitations* were likely to rise up here, as in other places, and plead his authority for *measures* which he could not approve, he was reserved in communicating his views, unless to persons who he was convinced were opposed to running revivals into extravagance and contempt. This, in some instances, brought against him the charge of being reserved and *quere*—often because he would not sit down, when his time was directly needed for the Lord's work, to explain all his views and plans to every individual who chose to visit him—or because he could not go to preach at several places, at the same time, to which he was invited. It is enough to say, that he had the cordial approbation of the most judicious ministers and intelligent laymen in the region, and that his visit was regarded with special gratitude to the great Head of the church.

"It was not to be expected that the devil would be still when he saw so much done to make his strong holds in this part of the country *tremble from turret to foundation stone.* Accordingly one of his agents at Cartersville, in the lower part of this county, when I was there preaching as a licentiate, imported some stale slanders from Connecticut, about Mr. Nettleton. The name of this man was O. G. W——, from Connecticut, and he attempted to gain currency for his stories by the aid of a letter from R. S. H——, also of Connecticut. All these slanders were silenced by an overwhelming mass of testimony from a number of the first men in New England.

"Dr. Nettleton paid several other visits to Virginia in later years, but generally in such poor health, that he attempted very little in the way of preaching the gospel. To the last, he retained the confidence and affection of those who had known him in the days of his greater vigor to labor for Christ, and the salvation of souls.

"With christian regard,

"Your brother in the gospel,

JESSE S. ARMISTEAD."

During the summer of 1829, he preached in several different places in New England, in all of which, I believe, he was instrumental of the conversion of some souls. I know not that there were extensive revivals in any of these places except in Monson, Mass., where he labored a short time amid scenes of great interest. The following is an extract of a letter from the Rev. Dr. Ely, pastor of the church in Monson, written June 4, 1844.

"Dr. Nettleton was among the few whose memory will be long cherished by the churches, as an eminent instrument, in the hands of God, of reviving his work, and of bringing multitudes to embrace the Saviour for righteousness and life. He seems to have been raised up by the great Head of the church,

to accomplish his purposes of mercy in the revival of pure religion, and in the conversion of sinners. His influence upon the ministry, and upon the churches where he labored, was peculiarly happy. He always left behind him a sweet savor of Christ. Harmony and christian affection, between pastors and people, were the result of his labors, even where they had been most successful in the conversion of souls. His zeal and earnestness in preaching the gospel, where Christ was named, were so tempered with practical wisdom and singular prudence, that he was received, and loved, and remembered as a messenger from God, sent to bless the people.

"His labors among us in the year 1829, are recollected with affection and gratitude. The revival with which we were favored that year, commenced about the middle of July. It was unusually powerful and still, and rapid in its progress. There was less animal excitement—convictions of sin were more thorough, and conversions were more clear and decided, than in some other seasons of revival which we have enjoyed. We had but little to do, but to stand still and see the salvation of God. Mr. Nettleton, if I mistake not, was then preaching at Enfield, Mass. By my request, he came and spent a week with us about the first of September, and preached frequently to the most solemn and attentive assemblies I ever witnessed. He then left us, and returned again in about ten days, and spent another week. He preached on one Sabbath only. On that day, I supplied his place at Enfield. He preached and held inquiry meetings in the evenings of the week, and visited the families with me in the day time. His labors were very acceptable, and eminently useful, and I bless God for his aid. Many were awakened under his preaching, and some hopefully converted; and those who entertained hope, were greatly enlightened and strengthened. He is remembered to this day with much affection.

"The chief excellence of his preaching, seemed to consist

in great plainness, and simplicity, and discrimination—in much solemnity and affectionate earnestness of manner—in the application of the truth to the heart and conscience—in taking away the excuses of sinners, and leaving them without help and hope, except in the sovereign mercy of God. In short, it was conformed to the work for which the Spirit was sent into the world, viz., to reprove or convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. This characteristic was most striking. His manner of dealing with awakened sinners, was peculiar. While it served to deepen their convictions, and lead them to Christ, it gained their confidence, and secured their belief of the truth. He knew, too, how to search those who expressed hope. And while he detected the hypocrite and encouraged the desponding, he was regarded by all with affection and reverence. A large number of the subjects of this revival, were young people, belonging to the first families in the place. Of about one hundred who expressed hope at that time, more than sixty belonged to the center district. Numbers of them have removed to other places, and others have died in the joyful hope of glory. Frequently have I heard them express their remembrance of Dr. Nettleton's labors, and of their obligations to him as the instrument of leading them to Christ. Some on examination for church fellowship, dated their awakening and conversion to his labors. Of the number admitted to the church that year, only four have apostatized. They have generally maintained the christian character, and some of them are eminently useful in the church. His labors, though short with us, were *greatly* blessed; and I shall ever remember them with gratitude to the great Head of the Church, who disposed him to come and help us."

In the fall of 1829, he went again to the south for the benefit of his health. He spent some time in Charleston, S. C. He then repaired to North Carolina, and preached considerably, during the months of February and March, at Chapel Hill, New Hope, and Hillsborough. In all these places, I have

understood, his labors were crowned with success; but to what extent I have not been able to learn.

The summer of 1830 he spent in New England, preaching occasionally in different places, as his strength would permit.

During the winter of 1830–31, he preached in Newark, N. J., and in the city of New York, assisting the Rev. Baxter Dickinson, and the Rev. Drs. Snodgrass and Spring, while God was pouring out his Spirit on their congregations.

In the spring of 1831, he took a voyage to England, for the benefit of his health. In a letter to a friend, just before he sailed, he says:

"I have but a few moments to write, and I never wrote with such fullness of heart. Drs. H. and G. and others you know, contemplate a voyage to England. My friends have arranged for me to go with them, without any agency of my own. But if I go, it is not to labor, and entirely at my own expense. If you hear that I am on the great waters, do remember me. I never loved my friends so ardently, as since I have been thinking of this voyage. I cannot tell you on paper the ten thousand tender recollections that have crowded on my mind."

He remained in England, including his visits to Scotland and Ireland, more than a year: and although he went not to labor, but to rest, he was not idle, nor were his labors altogether in vain.

During this period, he kept a very brief journal, in which he noted down the places which he visited, the texts from which he preached, together with a very few occasional remarks. From this journal it appears that he traveled extensively on the Island of Great Britain, and preached in many different places. He also attended several meetings of ministers, convened for the purpose of hearing from him some account of American revivals.

He found that much prejudice had been excited among pious people in England, by information which they had re-

ceived respecting certain modes of proceeding in revivals, in some parts of the country. While he was in Sheffield, he saw a letter which was written by an English clergyman, who was traveling in America, and who had attended several protracted meetings. He makes from this letter the following extract:

"Terrific sermons and other means are artfully contrived to stimulate the feelings of ignorant people. In compliance with the call given at the period of the highest excitement, they repair to *the anxious seat* by scores. As their fears are soon aroused, they are generally as soon calmed; and in a few days, many profess to entertain hope. Many such converts soon lose all appearance of religion; but they become conceited, secure, and gospel proof; so that while living in the open and habitual neglect of their duty, they talk very freely of the time when they experienced religion."

After giving this extract, he remarks:

"This man is said to be an excellent man, about fifty years old, having the confidence of christians and ministers wherever he is known in this kingdom. I find they are losing confidence in our American revivals. And so the imprudence of a few zealous individuals is doing more mischief to the cause of Christ in this kingdom, than all the opposition of open enemies could ever effect. I am almost exhausted in my attempts to vindicate our revivals. I can only tell the good ministers here, that I do not, and never did, approve of the practice mentioned in the above letter, and those who adopt it must alone answer for the consequences."

At Glasgow, in Scotland, he makes the following note in his journal.

"Breakfasted at Mrs. Smith's, in company with the Rev. Mr. Russell, of Dundee, and many others. I was questioned about American revivals—'anxious seats,'—as related by Mr. Colton and Mrs. Trollope. They said, they supposed that the practice of calling out the anxious, was universal in Amer-

ican revivals. A long talk ensued about the propriety of the measure. The subject of anxious seats has evidently depreciated American revivals a hundred per cent. in this country. The practice of calling persons to the anxious seat, they said, existed in England, only among the Methodists and Ranters. They seemed greatly surprised when I informed them, that this was not practiced, nor approved of, by the best ministers in New England, and they wished me to hold a meeting to disabuse the public mind on that subject."

The following brief notice of a meeting of Episcopal clergymen, will be read with deep interest.

"Attended a meeting of clergymen of the established church—principally evangelical—at the house of the Rev. Daniel Wilson, Islington. More than forty were present. I was called upon to give some account of American revivals. Commencing with the one in Yale College, in 1820, I was led to inquire if any one present could inform me of a young minister from America, who came to this country the last year, for his health, and who, as I had been informed, died somewhere in the vicinity of London. I had often inquired for the house where he died, but as yet had found no one who could give me information. His name was Sutherland Douglass. Mr. Wilson, the moderator, whom I was addressing, lifted up his hands, and exclaimed, 'I knew him. I received a note informing me that a young minister from America, a stranger, dangerously sick, desired to see me. I visited him twice, and prayed with him. He died on the third day after I first saw him. I brought his remains and buried them in my churchyard.' My reply was, he was one of the subjects of that revival in Yale College, of which I was speaking. (Much weeping.)"

Among his papers, are numerous letters written by persons in England and Scotland, from which it appears that he had warm friends in those countries. The writers of many of these letters express great obligations to him for the pleasure

and profit which they had derived from his preaching and conversation; and several of them allude to cases which had come to their knowledge, of the awakening and hopeful conversion of sinners under his labors. Although he was not permitted to witness in England, such scenes as he had frequently witnessed in this country, he had reason to believe, that God gave him some souls even there.

After his return from England, which was in August, 1832, he preached in a number of different places in New England and in the middle States; with what success I am unable to state. In the autumn of 1833, there was an interesting revival under his preaching, in Enfield, Conn.

The following is an extract of a letter from the Rev. Francis L. Robbins, pastor of the church in that town.

"I have not known the man, who in my deliberate judgment, has been the honored instrument of heaven in turning so many sinners to the knowledge of the truth, and saving souls from death, as the Rev. Mr. Nettleton. As he was himself 'mighty in the scriptures,' and 'fervent in the spirit,' he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, and was not satisfied unless men exhibited scriptural evidence of true religion. When he went into a place, remembering what was said of his master, 'he shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets,' he labored as far as practicable without observation, striving to turn the eyes of his hearers in upon themselves while they listened diligently to the word. His meetings, therefore, whether on the Sabbath, or at other seasons, were singularly marked with stillness, order, fixed and solemn attention.

"My people were sensibly struck with the correctness of this statement in relation to his labors here. For in this place he had 'seals of his ministry,' in a goodly number of hopeful converts who regarded him as their spiritual father, and remembered him with high respect and gratitude. I refer to the revival of religion here in 1833, when several of the

choice, active and exemplary members of this flock, received deep impressions, and became, as we believe, in heart and spirit, the people of the living God.

"Mr. Nettleton came here in September of that year, at my solicitation, when my health was, and had been, for several months, in a very feeble and precarious state; and when some of our good people were fearful of the result, not only to myself, but to the interests of religion. When Mr. Nettleton came, it was like the coming of Titus, especially to myself. Many of God's professed people had left their first love, and were engaged in matters of 'doubtful disputation,' which tended more to alienate and distract their feelings, than to quicken them in the work of the Lord.

"Mr. Nettleton continued with us nearly three months. Under his lucid and frequent exhibitions of divine truth, and by solemn addresses to the church, together with instruction given in the inquiry meeting, and by direct personal conversation, deep impressions were made on the minds of a number, which resulted in a disposition to renounce themselves, and humbly accept the salvation of the gospel. As he labored to instruct the people in the things of the kingdom of God, and establish them in the faith and order of the gospel, he very generally secured their esteem and confidence, and left a salutary influence behind him.

Not long after he left us, nearly twenty, mostly youth, who ascribed their conversion to the abounding grace of God, through his instrumentality, came forward, and made a public profession of religion. Several others, who entertained a hope at that time, clouded with many fears, have been revived and quickened, and prepared to profess Christ since that time; while others who were brought to serious consideration, under the religious exercises conducted by Mr. Nettleton, never, I believe, lost their impressions, until as objects of God's special remembrance, they were hopefully gathered in, in a subsequent revival. All of those who were brought hopefully from dark-

ness to light as the fruits of that revival, so far as I have knowledge, (for a few have removed to other places,) have walked worthy of their vocation, bearing the fruits of righteousness unto the praise and glory of God."

Many other places might be mentioned in which he preached occasionally, and in which there were some fruits of his labors, that will, I trust, abide, when all earthly scenes shall have passed away. But my object has been to mention only those places in which his labors are known to have been attended with very considerable success.

In 1833, the Pastoral Union of Connecticut was formed, and the Theological Institute was established. These measures did not originate with him, as some have supposed; but they were measures which he cordially approved, and in which he felt a deep and lively interest.

When the Seminary was organized, he was appointed Professor of Pastoral Duty. He was at the time absent at the south. In reply to a letter informing him of his appointment, he says—

"I hardly know what to say. I need not tell you how entirely I am interested in the whole concern. If it can be of any service to the Seminary for me to sustain some official relation to it, I should be sorry to decline. But it has from the beginning seemed to me, that on many accounts, I could plead its cause with more freedom and effect, without sustaining that relation to it. My reasons I cannot fully state on paper. At any rate, I must see you, and the Trustees, before I can give an affirmative answer. I have, too, some doubts whether my habits and the state of my health, will permit me to sit down to close study, and to all the requisite preparation for that department. I have been wishing for some time past, to shun public observation, and to retire more into solitude." He did not accept. But although he chose to sustain no official relation to the Seminary, he took up his abode at East Windsor, and consented to deliver some familiar lectures to

the students. His instruction was highly prized by the classes who enjoyed it.

During the last ten years of his life, although East Windsor was his home, he spent several winters at the south, and preached in several different places in New England, not without some success. But such was the state of his health as to render him unable to endure much excitement or fatigue. In a letter to Mrs. Parmele, dated Sept. 21, 1839, he says, "Your note came to hand this morning. Accept my best thanks for your kind invitation. It would, indeed, be very pleasant to spend a little season among my old friends in the still and retired town of Bolton, and once more talk over scenes that are past—'pleasant and mournful to the soul.' And *possibly*, if life be spared, that time may come. But I have journeyed so long and so far in this wilderness world, and have passed through so many scenes of alternate storm and sun-shine, that I am worn out with languor and fatigue, and have long since concluded to retire, and journey as little as possible, except so far as duty and the state of my health seem to demand."

In the year 1839, he received from two literary institutions,* the degree of D. D. This was an honor which he did not covet, as appears from the fact that it would have been conferred several years before, by one of the New England Colleges, had not his own remonstrances prevented. When he first received the intelligence, he was quite disturbed; and he asked one of his brethren what he should do. All the advice which he received from that brother was contained in the following anecdote. "A man once said to an aged clergyman, my neighbors are slandering me, and what shall I do? Do your duty, said the clergyman, and think nothing about it. If they are disposed to throw mud, let them throw mud; but do

* Hampden Sydney College, in Virginia, and Jefferson College, in Pennsylvania.

not attempt to wipe it off, lest you should wipe it all over you."

On reflection he seems to have come to the conclusion to which his friend, the late Dr. Porter, of Andover came, under similar circumstances, viz: "What shall a sober man do? If he refuses this title on general principles, because it is inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel, he charges a long list of such worthies as Watts, &c. with wearing a public mark of pride or folly. If he refuses it on principles that respect himself only, he is liable to be charged with the ostentation of humility, and really needs much prayer and heart-searching, to be certain that cursed pride is not at the bottom. Too much noise to get rid of this contemptible honor, 'resembles ocean into tempest wrought, to waft a feather, or to drown a fly.' A wise man would not kill a gnat, by a blow that might fracture his leg."

CHAPTER X.

His method of laboring in revivals of religion.

The question has often been asked, what was the secret of Dr. Nettleton's success? In answering this question, we must not overlook the fact, that God acts as a sovereign, and pours out his Spirit, when and where, and in what measure he pleases. No man ever more firmly believed this fact, or acted more habitually under the influence of this belief, than Dr. Nettleton. He was perfectly aware that all human means are utterly powerless, unless made effectual by the agency of the Holy Spirit. He did not rely on his own strength. He knew that he was an earthen vessel, and that when any success attended his labors, the excellency of the power was of God and not of him. It was his firm belief of this truth, powerfully operating on his mind, and leading him to place no dependence on his own efforts, but to look to God in humble, earnest, persevering, and confiding prayer; which constituted one principal reason of his signal success. If the question then be asked, why Dr. Nettleton was so much more successful in winning souls to Christ, than most other ministers, the great comprehensive answer is, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." This is the only answer which he was disposed to give. He attributed none of the glory to himself. Nor did any of it belong to him. He did not possess any power over the human heart which other men do not possess —he was only an instrument by which God accomplished his purposes. Nor was he selected as the instrument

of such good to mankind, because he was more worthy than others, or because he had done any thing to entitle him to this honorable distinction; for although he may have possessed qualifications for his work, which others did not possess; yet for all these qualifications, whether intellectual or moral, he was indebted to the Grace of God; and to that grace let the glory be ascribed.

But God in accomplishing his purposes, not only makes use of means, but adapts means to ends. He raises up instruments, and fits them for the work which they are destined to perform. Although no labor of the husbandman will insure to him a harvest, yet he has no reason to expect a harvest without labor: nor has he a right to conclude that it is a matter of indifference what kind of labor he employs. He knows it to be important to till his ground, and to sow in it good seed So in the moral world, means must be adapted to the end to be accomplished. Although Paul plant, and Apollos water, God must give the increase; yet we are not to suppose that it is of no consequence what seed is planted, or how it is planted, and watered. Although God might bring to pass different results, when the same means are used, and in the same manner; yet ordinarily when the results are different, there is some difference in the means or in the manner of employing them. Whitefield was not only a more successful preacher than others who were his cotemporeries; he was also a different preacher—not that he preached different doctrines; but he preached them in a different manner.

That Dr. Nettleton possessed peculiar skill in presenting truth to the minds of men, and laboring in revivals of religion, will be admitted by most who are at all acquainted with his history. During that protracted period of conviction, through which he passed before his reconciliation to God, he obtained a knowledge of the human heart which few possess. He could trace the secret windings of human depravity. He understood the refuges of lies to which sinners are prone to

resort, and he knew how to meet and to answer the various excuses by which they attempted to shield themselves from blame. He had an experimental acquaintance with the great truths of the gospel, which enabled him not only to present them with clearness to the minds of others, but to press them home upon their consciences as matters of everlasting moment. His deep religious experience enabled him to ascertain the precise state of mind of different individuals, and to adapt his instructions to their particular circumstances. When an impression was made upon the mind, he was careful to follow it up; well knowing the various ways in which religious impressions are liable to be effaced, and what is best adapted to deepen and perpetuate them.

The Rev. Mr. Pinneo, who was his theological instructor, and who was somewhat intimately acquainted with him after he became a preacher, says:

"If attending religious meetings together for a considerable season, and at different times in after years, when he was in full strength, may be considered as affording me the opportunity to judge, I would say, that brother Nettleton appeared to me to be uncommonly discerning and skillful in handling the doctrines of grace, and to have an uncommon insight into the human character; and to be able better than most, to place the naked truth upon the conscience, and to demolish with a few heavy strokes, all the vain excuses and refuges of lies to which sinners resort to screen themselves from the force of truth. And then he would follow up the impression, with great industry, skill and perseverance. Thus the Holy Spirit fitted him for the work, and employed him as an instrument of the conversion of sinners. But God acts as a sovereign; for neither he, nor other successful preachers, have been uniformly blest in their labors."

The following extract of a letter written to one of his brethren in the ministry, in 1823, shows his own views of the importance of following up an impression when made, and of

making special efforts when there is evidence that the Spirit of God is operating upon the minds of the people.

"It becomes every friend of Zion to prepare the way of the Lord through all the towns in this region. The fields are whitening all around us; and though God can create and gather the harvest without human instrumentality, yet we do not expect it. A revival *begun*, is likely to subside, without the constant pressure of gospel motives on the consciences of the awakened. It is obvious from experience, that God generally blesses, far more extensively, the means for extending his work, than he does for commencing it in the midst of surrounding darkness. As the conversion of one sinner is often the means of awakening every member of the family, and the impulse is again felt through every kindred branch, and through the village and town; so one town may be the means of a revival in another, and that in another. Though some ministers feel the truth of this remark, yet few if any realize its full force. There is as really a season of harvest in the moral as in the natural world. Now every hand that can hold a sickle, needs all its strength. The harvest *fully ripe*, neglected a few days, is forever lost. Other fields may whiten, and the same field a second time, but the former neglected harvest is lost forever. There is a crisis in the feelings of a people, which, if not improved, the souls of that generation will not be gathered. In the season of a revival, more *may* be done—more *is* often done to secure the salvation of souls, in a few days, or weeks, than in years spent in preaching at other times. One sermon, in a revival, often does more execution, than a hundred equally good, out of it. And I verily believe, that more good may be *lost* for the want of that *one*, than can be done with it, and with a thousand like it, when the crisis is past. 'Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then'—— it is now, or never. And 'he that reapeth receiveth wages.'"

The success of Dr. Nettleton was not in every respect like that of Whitefield. Whitefield's power was chiefly in the pulpit.

His eloquence was overpowering, and great multitudes were sometimes awakened by a single sermon. Dr. Nettleton did not expect such effects from a single effort in the pulpit. His success was the combined effect of preaching in the church, and in the lecture room, and of private conversation. His preaching was always solemn and impressive, and sometimes in a high degree eloquent. It was more instructive, and addressed more to the conscience, and less to the passions than that of Whitefield. As a natural consequence, the revivals which occurred under his preaching were more pure — attended with less fanaticism, and a smaller proportion of temporary converts.

When he commenced his labors in any place, one of the first things which he attempted was, to make the impression on the minds of the people, that their help must come from above, and that they must place no dependence on an arm of flesh. When he found that they were placing undue dependence on him, he often suddenly disappeared, at least for a season. Until this state of feeling was destroyed he had no expectation of accomplishing any good.

It was a prime object with him, when he went into a place where there was no special seriousness, to awaken a proper state of feeling among the people of God. Knowing that when God pours out his Spirit, he usually first revives his work in the hearts of his own people, and that he awakens and converts sinners in answer to their prayers, he endeavored to impress upon their minds a sense of their responsibility.* Among his first sermons, he would sometimes preach from Rom. xiii. 11. "And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep." And sometimes from Ps.

* While the Rev. Fosdic Harrison was preaching in Roxbury, in 1813, just previous to his settlement there, Dr. Nettleton made him a visit. "There was, at the time," says Mr. Harrison, "more than usual attention to the means of grace. One evening he attended a meeting with me in a remote part of the town, where there were tokens of the special presence of the Holy Spirit; and yet, to his mind, indications that something was wanting. After many inquiries, he asked,

h. 12, 13 "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." But while he called on christians with great plainness and fidelity to awake out of sleep, he never addressed them in a harsh and denunciatory manner. With kindness and affection he would remind them of their obligations and their sins, and present to them such considerations as were suited to humble them, and to excite them to a faithful discharge of their duty. He loved to see christians deeply sensible of their sinfulness, and at the same time deeply affected with the condition of sinners who were perishing around them. When things began to assume a favorable appearance, he did not like to see professors of religion elated, and disposed to talk about it with an air of exultation. He knew that flattering appearances often suddenly vanish, and he had learned that it is apt to be so, when christians begin to rejoice prematurely. He frowned upon every thing like ostentation, and discouraged the disposition which too often prevails, to proclaim a revival upon the first indication of unusual seriousness. His views on the subject are expressed, as he has been heard to say, in the following remarks of the Rev. Mr. Brace, in his account of the revival in Newington.

"It is no favorable thing to see professors, at such a time, full of glee, busy in proclaiming a revival. A true work of grace needs no proclamation. Is there not reason to fear that revivals are often checked in this way? If, when a little seriousness appears, in a few individuals in a place, it is immediately noised abroad, and perhaps printed, that a great work is going on, is it not overrating the attention, and tempting christians to cease their mourning, to lift up their eyes to

'have you established a prayer-meeting and urged the church to pray for a revival?' I replied, no, not yet. 'O,' said he, 'that is the difficulty. If I had known that, I would not have gone to the meeting. It is of no use to preach, if the church does not pray.' From that hint I immediately established a weekly prayer-meeting, after which, we soon had cases of hopeful conversion."

see what is not to be seen, to say — ah, we have found it, henceforth we may rejoice, and be satisfied. I have heard many such introductions and confident predictions, when the result proved to be feeble. Such a course, not only exposes religion to reproach among the enemies of revivals, but prevents the very thing which it was designed to promote."

His views on this subject are also expressed by himself in a letter to the Rev. Mr. Aikin, of Utica, dated Albany, January 13, 1827. Speaking of the interesting state of religious feeling which existed in Albany, he says:

"But I have great fears that the disposition of some zealous christians round about us, to proclaim it abroad, and to run before their own hearts, and the real state of things, will run it out into noise. I have already felt the evil. I find that many are disposed to make ten times as much of the same state of things, as I have been in the habit of doing, though they know but a small part of what I have seen in this place. Various reports have gone out concerning a revival in Albany, which have done us much mischief. If they would let us alone I should expect a great work in this city. But amid so much noise and bluster of christians, it promises fair to end in smoke. But after all, the good people here are astonished at our stillness. My opinion is, that had they been ten times as still, they would have witnessed ten times as much. Seven years ago about two thousand souls were hopefully born into the kingdom in this vicinity, in our own denomination with comparative stillness. But the times have altered. The kingdom of God now cometh with great observation."

Dr. Nettleton never held out the idea to churches that they could "get up a revival," or that they could have a revival at any time. It is true that he set before them the encouragement which God has given to humble and fervent prayer. But he always maintained that a revival of true religion depends on the sovereign interposition of God. Nor did he believe in the modern notion of the prayer of faith, viz: that

God will always grant the particular things for which we pray, if we only believe that he will do it.

His mode of preaching, both to saints and to sinners, was solemn, affectionate, and remarkably plain. His style was simple, perspicuous and energetic. His illustrations were familiar and striking: such as rendered his discourses intelligible to persons of the weakest capacity, and at the same time interesting to persons of the most cultivated intellect. He always commanded the attention of his audience. Every eye was fixed, and a solemn stillness pervaded the assembly. There was an earnestness in his manner, which carried conviction to the minds of his hearers, that he believed what he spoke, and that he believed it to be truth of everlasting moment There was also a directness in his preaching, which made the hearers feel that they were the persons addressed; and such was his knowledge of the human heart, and of the feelings which divine truth excites when presented to the minds of unsanctified men, that he was able to anticipate objections, and to follow the sinner through his various refuges of lies, and strip him of all his excuses. So great was his skill in this respect, that it often seemed to individuals while listening to his preaching, that he must know their thoughts. And in a certain sense it was true. By knowing his own heart he knew the hearts of others: because "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." He understood from his own experience, what thoughts and feelings would be excited in the minds of sinners by the contemplation of particular doctrines. When, therefore, he exhibited these doctrines in his preaching, and perceived that the attention of his hearers was fixed upon them, he *did* know, to some extent, what were their thoughts and feelings; and this enabled him to adapt his instructions to their circumstances, and to give to each one a portion in due season.

This was particularly true of his preaching in the lecture room. Here he was at home, and enjoyed the greatest free-

dom. Here he seemed to come in direct contact with the minds of his hearers. He watched every countenance, and in this way he was assisted in judging of the effect of his preaching on the minds of different individuals. In establishing his positions, his reasoning was so clear and forcible, a to be irresistible; and conviction came upon the mind like a flash of lightning. And the truth was urged home upon th conscience, as a matter of personal and infinite interest. Here it was that those scenes of deep distress, occasioned by a vivid sense of guilt and the apprehension of the wrath of God, so frequently occurred. It often happened in the lecture room, that sinners were so overwhelmed with a sense of their lost condition, that it became necessary to remove them to a neighboring house.

It was never the object of Dr. Nettleton to produce mere excitement, by working upon the imagination and sympathy of his hearers. The Rev. Dr. Rice, speaking of his labors in Virginia, in 1828, says, "Mr. Nettleton is a remarkable man, and chiefly, I think, remarkable for his power of producing a great excitement without much *appearance* of feeling. The people do not either weep or talk away their impressions. The preacher chiefly addresses Bible truth to their consciences." This was a striking characteristic of his preaching. He commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. His object was to lead his hearers to see their real character and condition. All excitement which was not the result of clear apprehensions of divine truth, he considered not merely useless, but positively injurious. The cases of deep distress which occurred under his preaching, were not the effect of mere symyathy, but of clear conviction of sin.

One thing which contributed greatly to Dr. Nettleton's success, was his faithful private conversation. Many were by this means awakened from their stupidity, and excited to attend to the concerns of their souls. He had a talent which

few possess, of introducing religious conversation with individuals of every description. He was rarely abrupt, never harsh, but always kind and affectionate. His first object was to secure the confidence of the individual with whom he was conversing, and to lead him on gradually to a consideration of the importance of religion in general, and then to a more particular consideration of his own spiritual state. When he perceived that an impression had been made, he would follow it up and watch its progress with intense assiduity. He could easily introduce religious conversation with persons of every grade in society from the highest to the lowest. To a lawyer he once said, "I have often thought that persons in your situation—persons of liberal education and high standing in society, are in peculiar danger of losing their souls; and for this among other reasons, that every body is afraid to converse with them." This remark opened the way for a perfectly free conversation, in which he was as faithful as he would have been to any individual in the humblest walks of life.

In conversing with awakened sinners, he exhibited great wisdom. There was no part of the ministerial work in which he excelled more than in this. For this, he was pre-eminently fitted, as has been already intimated, by his own religious experience. He was generally able, with but little difficulty, to ascertain the exact state of the sinner's mind, and he knew what instruction was suited to his case.

It was not his custom to converse *much* with awakened sinners. He has often remarked, that a great deal of conversation has a tendency to confuse the mind, and to dissipate, rather than to deepen, religious impressions. He would converse with them enough to keep the subject before their minds, and to correct any false notions which they might have imbibed. More than this, he considered not only unnecessary, but prejudicial. He did not like to have awakened sinners spend most of their time in running from one individual to

another, to seek sympathy and instruction, lest, to use the language of Dr. Rice, they should "weep and talk away their impressions." He was desirous that they should be much alone, engaged in reading the scriptures, serious meditation and prayer. Mr. Brace, in his account of the revival in Newington, after describing the solemnity which pervaded the assembly at the close of one of Dr. Nettleton's meetings, says, "He requested them to retire without making a noise. 'I love to talk to you, you are so still. It looks as though the Spirit of God was here. Go away as still as possible. Do not talk by the way, lest you forget your own hearts. Do not ask how you like the preacher; but retire to your closets—bow before God and give yourselves to him this night.'" He frequently gave such advice.

In his conversation with awakened sinners, he was careful never to flatter them, or to say any thing suited to allay their fears. He never expressed to them, the opinion that their condition was hopeful. On the contrary, he gave them to understand, that while they remained impenitent, there was an awful uncertainty whether they would be saved. He urged the duty of immediate repentance, and showed them that they could do nothing short of repentance, which would in the least degree, improve their condition. He endeavored to destroy all their dependence on their own works—to show them that all their religious services were selfish and sinful, and that God has made no promise of pardon to any thing short of faith and repentance.

Sometimes, instead of entering into particular conversation with individuals who were under concern of mind, he would drop a single remark suited to awaken in their minds, profitable trains of thought—such as the following:

"If your heart is so hard that you cannot repent now, what will you do, when it becomes a great deal harder?"

"What reason can you assign why you should not love God?"

"Oh, what a hard heart you have."

"What reason have you to think that you ever shall repent?"

It was not uncommon for awakened sinners to feel that he could give them relief; but when he found that they were relying on him to save them, he would treat them with neglect. This often called into exercise, the enmity of their hearts, and thus served to deepen their conviction, by showing them their utterly lost condition.

His feelings were often severely tried, by the injudicious directions which some professors of religion, were in the habit of giving to awakened sinners. He has been heard to say, that he apprehended more evil from this source, than from all the opposition of the avowed enemies of religion. He usually occupied one meeting in considering these injudicious directions. A sketch of the address delivered on these occasions, is found among his papers, from which I make the following extract:

1. "*Wait at the Pool. You must not be discouraged, for we read of one who waited thirty and eight years.*

"This text is used by way of accommodation. The impotent man was waiting at the pool, not for the pardon of his sins, but to be healed of a bodily disease. We may accommodate passages of scripture, for the purpose of illustrating acknowledged truth; but we must not trace analogies too far. In many respects there is a striking analogy between a depraved heart, and a diseased body; but there is one important point in which the analogy does not hold—the one is criminal; the other is merely calamitous.

"This use of the passage contradicts many plain declarations of the Bible—particularly all those which enjoin the duty of immediate repentance. Suppose a person should address sinners in this manner—Behold now is the accepted time;—behold now is the day of salvation—*But wait at the*

pool. Choose ye this day whom ye will serve—*But wait at the pool.*

"God now commandeth all men every where, to repent *But wait at the pool.*

"The effect of this direction is, to make the impression on the sinner's mind, that he is not under obligation to obey God immediately;—and of course, it counteracts the influence of every command of God on the sinner's conscience.

"The sinner is told that he must not be discouraged, for the impotent man waited thirty-eight years. This however is not said. It is said that he had an infirmity thirty-eight years; but it is not said that he had waited a day. Be this, however, as it may, he was not healed by the pool, after all; nor is there any evidence that he would have been, if he had waited all his life.

2. "*Be patient and wait God's time.*

"What is the meaning of this direction, when given to an awakened sinner?

"*Be patient!* Is the sinner to understand that he is too anxious for the salvation of his soul, and that he ought to wait patiently in his sins till God shall see fit to change his heart? To tell the anxious sinner to be patient without a new heart, is the same as to tell him to dismiss all his anxiety, and to go back to a state of stupidity. Patient in his sins! Rather let him be more and more impatient with himself and with his deplorable condition. Let him tremble in view of a judgment to come, and weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon him.

"What is meant, when the sinner is directed to wait God's time? Is it meant that God is not now ready to receive the sinner? Is it meant that the sinner is willing to do his part, and that he must wait for God to do his? If so, why not speak plainly, and tell the sinner, I know you are ready and willing to be a christian; but God is not yet ready and will-

ing to receive you. But if God is not now ready to receive the returning sinner, what evidence is there, that he ever will be ready?

"But when *is* God's time? Do those who direct sinners to wait God's time, mean that it is not their duty to repent and believe, till God grants them repentance and faith? Then it never was the duty of those sinners to repent, who have gone to destruction, and it never will be. They waited all their lives, and are waiting still, and will wait to all eternity. And it has never yet been the duty of any sinner, who is now impenitent, to repent, and if God should not grant him repentance, it never will be. But this directly contradicts the scriptures.

"The sinner under conviction is distressed with a sense of his obligation to comply with the terms of salvation without delay. And there is no way to relieve him from his distress while impenitent, but to release him from his sense of obligation to repent. To direct him to wait God's time is directly calculated to produce this effect, and to counteract the operations of the Divine Spirit. It is to plead the sinner's cause against God.

"But is it not hard to distress the sinner by pressing him with his obligations? It is painful, but it is necessary. It is painful to the surgeon to probe to the bottom a dangerous wound; but it must be done, or the patient will die. If through false pity we console the sinner under these circumstances, there is reason to fear that his blood will be required at our hands. If we direct the sinner to wait, we direct him to run the awful hazard of losing his soul.

"It is sometimes said to the sinner, under deep distress, *don't despair.*

"This expression not unfrequently produces a bad effect upon the sinner's mind.

"It is sometimes the case that sinners speak of the greatness of their sins and the hopelessness of their condition, on

purpose to be flattered and consoled. And when they do not, it is always best to admit that their case is quite as bad as they represent it. It is proper to hold up the fullness of the atonement, and the readiness of God to forgive all who repent. But this the sinner generally does not doubt. The thing that distresses the convicted sinner, is the fear that he never shall repent. From his own experience he has full conviction that it will never be easier to repent than now. His sins are increasing, and his heart is becoming more and more perverse. God has said, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' He believes it. He despairs of obtaining salvation without repentance; and of this he ought to despair.

"In every case of clear conviction, there is in the mind of the sinner a painful sense of obligation to repent, and a fearful apprehension that he never shall repent. In this state, he sometimes inquires, do you think there is any hope in my case? Do you think I ever shall become a christian? This is a most interesting crisis; and a little flattery here may ruin the soul. The proper answer to these inquiries is, 'I do not know. It is altogether uncertain. One thing is certain, however great your sins may be, if you will repent, they shall be pardoned; but whether you ever will repent, is altogether uncertain. Sinners as anxious as you, and perhaps more so, have returned to stupidity, and their last state has become worse than the first.' When sinners are in this state of mind, their friends are exceedingly prone to flatter them. '*Oh don't despair—Be patient—Wait God's time—You will doubtless find relief.*' Such language is exceedingly dangerous. Every word takes it for granted that the sinner's concern for his soul is without foundation. One of two things is true—either such directions are wrong, or the sinner is not under conviction; for if he is under real conviction, the Spirit of God is showing him his true condition. His apprehensions are well founded, and if we attempt to remove these apprehensions, we directly counteract the operations of the Holy Spirit."

The foregoing extract will give the reader some idea of the manner in which Dr. Nettleton was in the habit of dealing with awakened sinners. He did not heal the heart of sinners slightly, nor cry peace, peace, when God had not spoken peace.

Dr. Nettleton discouraged every thing like confusion and disorder in religious meetings. Whenever he saw any tendency to wild enthusiasm and extravagance, he exerted all his influence to check it. This is evident from the extract of a letter to the Rev. John Frost, inserted in a former chapter, in which he gives some account of the commencement of the revival in Salisbury, Conn.

In the same letter he quotes, as expressive of his own views, the following remark of President Edwards. "It has been a common device of the devil to overset a revival of religion, when he finds he can keep men quiet and secure no longer, by driving them to excesses and extravagances. He holds them back as long as he can, but when he can do it no longer, then he will push them on, and if possible, run them upon their heads. And it has been by this means chiefly, that he has been successful, in several instances, to overthrow most hopeful and promising appearances."

Dr. Nettleton never adopted the anxious seat, nor any of its kindred measures. He never requested persons to rise in the assembly to be prayed for, or to signify that they had given their hearts to God, or that they had made up their minds to attend to the subject of religion. He never encouraged females to pray and exhort in promiscuous assemblies. He never held his meetings to a late hour in the night; nor did he encourage loud praying and exhorting. He did not encourage young converts, and others who had more zeal than discretion, to take the charge of religious meetings, or to go forth as public exhorters. He was never personal in his prayers and exhortations, nor did he countenance it in others. He did not allow himself to denounce ministers and professors of

religion, as cold and dead, and as the enemies of revivals. He entirely disapproved of all such measures, and considered them as suited to mar the purity of revivals, and to promote fanaticism and delusion. It was against such measures as these, introduced in the western revivals, that he set his face in 1826, as we shall see in the sequel.* His meetings were regular and orderly; characterized by great stillness and solemnity. They were, it is true, sometimes interrupted by the overwhelming distress of a convicted sinner. But when this was the case, the individual was immediately removed to a neighboring house, and means were adopted to check the effect of mere sympathy on the occasion—as in the case which occurred at Milton, already mentioned. I will mention another case which occurred at Waterbury. At an evening meeting, a man was so overcome with distress, that it became necessary to remove him from the house. For a moment the congregation was greatly agitated. Dr. Nettleton requested a physician who was present, to attend to the case, and then desired the congregation to be seated and to attend to the discourse. Immediately the assembly was as still as if nothing special had occurred.

Dr. Nettleton was in the habit of appointing meetings of inquiry for those who were under religious concern; and these meetings, under his management, were eminently useful. They were usually conducted in the following manner. After a short address, suited to produce solemnity, and to make all who were present feel that they were in the presence of a holy and heart searching God, he would offer prayer. Then, he would speak to each individual present in a low voice, unless the number was so large as to render it impossible.

* He says in a letter to a friend, written in 1835, "I did not oppose these measures because they were *new*, but because of the mischief which they had done in bringing the very name of a revival into disgrace. And up to this day, I have in *no instance* called on sinners to take a separate or *anxious seat*. Nor was I ever present to witness the scene as practiced by others."

When that was the case, he would sometimes have one or two brethren in the ministry to assist him. He would converse with each one but a short time. The particular object of this conversation was to ascertain the state of each one's mind. He would then make a solemn address, giving them such counsel as he perceived to be suited to their condition; after which he closed the meeting with prayer. He usually advised them to retire with stillness, and to go directly to their closets.

He was very particular to warn those who were anxious, and those who were indulging hope, against the danger of self-deception. He reminded them of the deceitfulness of the human heart, and of the unremitted efforts of the great-adversary to delude unwary souls. On entering a house one morning, in New Haven, in the revival of 1815, a person said to him, "here are three more rejoicing." He replied, "if I knew as well as the angels whether they have truly repented, I should know whether to rejoice with them." He was very cautious not to encourage premature hope. He never told a person that he thought he had experienced religion; but he often advised persons to give up their hopes.

He took great pains to instruct young converts in the fundamental principles of the christian religion. He would often appoint meetings for their special benefit. In these meetings he was wont to explain and enforce in a familiar manner, the doctrines of the gospel. Hence the young converts became rooted and grounded in the truth, and continued steadfast in the faith. In this way also, they became acquainted with one another, and receiving the same doctrines and drinking into the same spirit, they became united as a band of brethren.

He felt it to be of the first importance to preach the doctrines of grace with great plainness, in revivals of religion. He had no confidence in those revivals, in which these doctrines could not be preached. His opinion was that while the preaching of divine sovereignty and election, with their kin-

dred doctrines, was eminently fitted to check fanaticism, and put a period to a spurious religious excitement, it was equally adapted to promote a genuine revival of religion. In Dr. Porter's lectures on Homiletics, I find the following reference to Dr. Nettleton's opinion and practice in relation to this subject.

"The minister of Christ, whose experience and success in such seasons have been greater than those of any other man in modern times, observed to me, 'I have seen churches run down by repeated excitements in which there was *emotion* merely, without *instruction*.' 'In the first stage of a revival,' said he, 'while depravity is yet ascendant, and conscience asleep, I would preach the Law, with its awful sanctions and solemn claims on sinners to be holy and that immediately. But when the first moments of a revival are past, and sinners are settling down on presumptuous confidences, I would preach Election. Conscience is then roused enough to make a cord which sinners cannot break. Their own convictions are on my side, so that they cannot escape; and I would hold them fast, and repeat my strokes under the fire and hammer of divine truth.'"

He was cautious in admitting persons to the church. He would not encourage any to make a profession of religion till they gave satisfactory evidence of a change of heart. His fidelity in this respect, is illustrated by the following fact. In the town of W——, where there had been an extensive revival under his preaching, a meeting was appointed for the examination of those who were desirous of making a profession of religion. A man and his wife attended this meeting, who had, till a short time before, belonged to another religious denomination. They were persons of great respectability, and of a blameless life; but they gave no satisfactory evidence of having experienced a change of heart. The deacons and committee of the church were in favor of admitting them. They knew not how to reject persons of their character and

standing in society. But Dr. Nettleton would not consent. The next day, he called on these individuals, and in a kind and affectionate manner informed them of his fears respecting their religious experience, and pointed out to them the danger of making a profession of religion without the requisite qualifications. They immediately withdrew their application. Soon after this, Dr. Nettleton left the town; but within a short time, he was informed by letter, that these individuals had both become the hopeful subjects of divine grace. Some months afterwards, on a visit to the place, he called on this family. The man and his wife both met him at the door, and with tears in their eyes they seized him by the hand, and broke out in strains of the most unfeigned gratitude. "Oh," said they, "if it had not been for your faithfulness, we should have lost our souls." Let this example stimulate all ministers to faithfulness and caution in admitting members to the communion of the church.

Dr. Nettleton had but little confidence in the conversion of persons who had been in the habit of using spirituous liquors, unless they entirely abandoned the habit, and he was very unwilling to admit such persons to the church. His views on this subject are expressed in a letter which was written to Dr. Beecher, in May, 1822, and which was afterwards published in the Spirit of the Pilgrims. This letter is so valuable on many accounts, that I shall insert it entire.

"My dear brother: — I hear frequently from many places where God has, of late, poured out his Spirit and revived his work. My friends residing in these places, far and near, either visit me or write to me, and tell me all their joys and sorrows. For a number of years I have kept a list of the names of those who have hopefully experienced religion, and made a profession of it, in these revivals. When far from them, in my retired moments, I have often read over their names, and pondered on them, and on the scenes they have awakened, with emotions too big for utterance. I have watched them

with anxious solicitude, and have made particular inquiry about the spiritual welfare of each one, as opportunity presented. My heart has often been *refreshed*, when some Timothy has *brought me good tidings of the faith and charity of the young converts*. No tidings have been more *refreshing*. I have often had occasion to adopt the language of Paul on this very subject, '*What thanks can we render to God again, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God.*'

"During the leisure occasioned by my late illness, I have been looking over the regions where God has revived his work for the two years past. The thousands who have professed Christ in this time, in general, appear to run well. Hitherto I think they have exhibited more of the christian temper, and a better example than the same number who have professed religion when there was no revival. With hundreds of these I conversed when anxious for their souls, and afterwards, when rejoicing in hope. Some of them I have followed through life, and down to the grave. *If genuine religion is not found in revivals, I have no evidence that it exists in our world.* Some few, indeed, have dishonored their profession, have opened afresh the wounds of the Saviour, and caused the hearts of his friends to bleed. Bunyan says, 'If at any time I heard of such instances of apostacy among those who had been hopefully benefited by my ministry, I feel worse than if I had followed one of my own natural children to the grave.' I have lost near and dear relations, but the tidings of which Bunyan speaks, have sometimes struck me with deeper sadness. Of the few who have finally apostatized, you may wish to know the cause. I have made particular inquiry, and find that the declension of some has commenced with an undue conformity to the world; but the sin of *intemperance* has caused more trouble, and done more dishonor to the cause of Christ, than any other that can be named.

"Though some have confessed, and doubtless repented of other crimes, yet few if any excommunications have hitherto

taken place, for any crime except intemperance. I have heard from S—— county, that of the hundreds who professed religion there two years ago, a few only have been called to a public confession, and these have been restored.

"I have heard of one excommunication. He was an acquaintance of mine, a man about thirty-five years of age, in the town of M——. He had been a little inclined to intemperance. He was anxious with others; his conversion was considered interesting; and at the time he professed religion, it was thought that his habit was broken. But before I left that place he ventured to drink a little. On a public occasion he became boisterous, and charged one man with lying, and that led on to an angry dispute, in which all present considered him the aggressor. This was soon noised through the place.

"It gave a general shock to all the young converts. I well remember the effect. Each one began to tremble lest he too should wound the cause which was dearer to him than life. I shall not forget what tenderness of conscience the young converts manifested. Each one seemed to tremble most of all for himself. The next morning Mr. H—— became sober, and now he felt exceedingly chagrined on remembering what he had said and done. He told me that his first thought in the morning was, that he had dishonored religion, and he could not bear to be seen. He was almost tempted to leave his family and friends, and abscond. He however confessed his fault and appeared penitent. But, sad to relate, he drank again; and, as I have been informed, is now cut off and utterly abandoned.

"A Mr. T——, in the town of B——, was under conviction, hopefully experienced religion, and made a public profession, with about sixty others. He appeared well, with the exception of this circumstance, that previous to his convictions, he had been a little inclined to intemperance. In the judgment of charity, he had reformed and become a new man. He forsook his wicked companions, prayed in his family, and

appeared to be much engaged in religion, and continued for a number of months to adorn his profession. But he began by slow and cautious steps (as he thought) to *sip a little* only for his health. Though not drunk he became foolish, and this led on to other things, until he dishonored the cause of religion. He made a public confession of his fault, and for a while appeared penitent. But he drank again, and this led to other unchristian conduct, which demanded christian satisfaction. His brethren began, a few days since, their endeavors to reclaim him. But he removed in the night, with all his family, and has left the State to avoid another confession. We consider him a ruined man.

"In the town of K——, a promising young man, hopefully experienced religion, during the recent powerful revival there, and made a public profession, on the same day with a hundred and six others. I believe he was never considered at all inclined to intemperance. He left K—— and labored in company with others, who made free use of ardent spirits. He soon contracted a taste for it, and we have heard of the public disgrace which he has brought on the cause of religion. With taunting voice, the enemies have been heard to say around him, 'There is one of Mr. K——'s converts.' Brother K—— went after him to a neighboring place, and the young man has just made a public confession of his fault, and appears penitent. I find that all are flattering themselves that he will never offend again. I should think and rejoice with them, if I had not so often been disappointed. Of the whole number who professed religion in that revival, this, I think, is the only instance of an offence demanding a public confession.

"When I look back on revivals which took place ten or fifteen years ago, I have been agreeably surprised to find so many of the subjects of them continuing to adorn their profession. Take the whole number who professed religion as the fruit of these revivals, and take the same number who professed religion when there was no general revival, and I do not think

the former have out-shined the latter. I have not made a particular estimate, but from what I have seen, I do believe the number of excommunications from the latter is more than double, in proportion to the former. And I find, all along, that more excommunications have taken place in consequence of intemperance, than for any other crime.

"A Mr. H——, a member of Brother T——'s church, was thought to have experienced religion in L——, in the days of your predecessor. He was a promising, active young man, much beloved and highly esteemed by christians, and never suspected of intemperance until about a year since. The disclosure of this fact not only grieved christians, but surprised and astonished every body. Though he was not suspected of intemperance, it was afterwards ascertained that he had been in the habit of drinking a little in private. This is one method of covering sin. Whoever does it is privately working out the ruin of his soul. But Mr. H—— made a public confession, appeared penitent, and all rejoiced in his reformation. This I said, was about a year ago. When I was last in N—— he called at brother T——'s on an evening visit. It was evident he had been drinking. The next day brother T—— warned him in the most solemn manner, but all to no purpose. He was past fear, and past shame, and all have given him up as lost. He had accomplished his ruin by drinking in private, before his friends had any chance to prevent it. I could name a number of individuals, in different towns in this State, whose case is similar to this.

"Now, my brother, what shall be done? I do not ask what shall be done to reclaim those who have so grievously offended. For these nothing, ordinarily, can be done. Their case is hopeless. My inquiry is, what shall be done to prevent the future disgrace of the cause of Christ? As for those who have confessed their fault, and have been restored to fellowship, they must remain where they are, until the next offence cuts them off. But a public confession for intemperance I

think is about nothing, and ought to go for nothing. *The only evidence of repentance in such cases, is* A CONTINUED COURSE OF ENTIRE ABSTINENCE FROM ARDENT SPIRITS OF EVERY KIND.

"As for those who think they have experienced a change, if their habits are bordering on intemperance, we ought to be cautious how we admit them to a public profession. If they have been in the habit of drinking freely, though not to intoxication, however clear in other respects, this circumstance alone renders the evidence of their conversion very doubtful. From what I have seen, I do believe no class of persons are more likely to be deceived with false hopes than the intemperate. If, while under conviction, a person allows himself to sip a little, or raises his sinking spirits in the least, he is sure to grieve away the Spirit of God.

"During the revival at S—— two years ago, I witnessed an instance, which if you please, I will relate. Mr. A—— was one of the most respectable men in that village, about thirty-five years of age, who kept a large boarding-house. His wife was under deep conviction, and soon was rejoicing in hope, and prayed with and for her husband. This was the means of his conviction; though at the time it was not known. Report said that he was confined to his bed, and was dangerously ill. Hints were privately circulated that he was anxious for his soul, and was ashamed to have it known. It was late in the evening when brother G—— went to his house, and found him in a bed-room, in a remote corner, in the greatest agony. 'What is the matter?' said brother G——. 'Oh, I am sick; I am in such distress.' 'But your pulse is regular, where is your pain?' He made no reply, but with violence smote upon his breast. He asked, 'Is it there?' 'It is,' he replied. The next evening, I called and found him in the same distress. His convictions appeared to be deep. But when I returned, I suggested to brother G—— a suspicion of the smell of ardent spirits. I then related a number of anecdotes of false conversions, connected with his

suspicious scent. 'Mr. A. is a very moral man,' said he, 'and far from suspicion on that point.' But for fear, he sent me back to give him a solemn caution. I returned, and with much delicacy, warned him not to taste, lest—— He seemed startled at my suggestion, and assured me he was far from the habit. I requested his wife to watch him, and learned from her, that through his distress his strength had greatly failed, and that he had taken a *very little only*, to prevent his sinking entirely. I returned and observed to brother G—— that I feared Mr. A. was a ruined man. His concern continued for a few days, when he became exceedingly joyful. His conversion was considered wonderful. But my joy was checked. I could not forget the smell of ardent spirits. I called and found him much elated with joy. But when I cautioned him, he seemed surprized, and somewhat offended, and observed, 'I think I have been distressed enough to experience religion!' 'Ah,' said I 'now I doubt more than ever whether your heart has ever been changed. Do you think there is any merit in the distress of an awakened sinner? Suppose you had been to hell, and endured the torments of the damned; what then! It is not distress, but love to God, and a change of heart, which alone can fit the sinner for heaven.'

"After a little conversation, his heart rose in such opposition, that he relinquished his hope; his distress returned in a moment; and he cried out, '*What shall I do?*' His heart was evidently unrenewed, and quarreling with the justice of God. From some expressions, I caught a glimpse of his heart, and that, if he should ever experience religion, it was his secret purpose never to make a public profession of it. He was evidently unhumbled—*like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.* I put into his hands, Edwards on the justice of God in the damnation of sinners. Shortly he again found relief. He wished to profess religion with others, but prudence led us to wait; and the result was, that in process of time,

he became a sot. I know not of a more hopeless being on earth. He does no business; has drunk himself out of his property, and almost out of his reason; and as brother G—— says, he has become a brute.

"I could fill sheets with the relation of facts of a similar character; all of which lead to the conclusion, that persons of intemperate habits, though deeply convicted, are far more likely to rest in a false hope than others. However distressed a person of this character may have been, or however joyful in hope, I think we may set it down as a probable sign of a false conversion, if he allows himself to *taste a single drop*. If he does not give evidence that he intends to abstain wholly and forever, I feel decided that he ought not to profess religion. If he cannot be willing to do this, he can have no sufficient evidence of his own repentance or conversion, and his hope is a spider's web. Brother T—— preached an excellent sermon, not long since from these words; 'Cleanse thou me from secret faults; keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.' In the class of presumptuous sinners he placed the person of intemperate habits. 'The person who has drunk to excess, and has been warned, cannot venture to drink again, at all, without sinning presumptuously. He sins deliberately and with his eyes open. *Let him remember that he drinks damnation.*' I felt the justice of this last sentence. It was attended with a thrill of horror. I am satisfied that he who cannot break off entirely, and at once, can never do it. And without it, we can have no evidence of his piety Every time he tastes, he is putting fire to tinder and powder. If he really thinks he can drink a little, and yet not become a drunkard, his danger is so much more the greater. This confidence evinces his consummate ignorance of his own heart. This confidence, if not destroyed, will damn him. '*He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.*'

"I wish that all the young converts who make a profession of religion, would make it a point of conscience not to taste

of ardent spirits. This is the way in which many have dishonored the cause of Christ on public occasions. In this way, thousands have become drunkards. I scarcely expect that any drunkard will be reformed, by any measures that can be adopted. The only successful method of preventing this kind of disgrace to religion in future, is, to begin with the temperate. Though the plague cannot be cured, it may be shunned. Had all young converts seen what I have, they would need no other motives to induce them to adopt the resolution to abandon the use of ardent spirits forever. Could I learn that all the young converts in your parish had jointly adopted this resolution, it would be to themselves, to you, and to me, a most delightful evidence of the sincerity of their christian profession, as well as of genuine conversion. '*Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.*'

"Yours as ever."

CHAPTER XI.

Character of the Revivals under his preaching.

THERE was a striking resemblance between the revivals which occurred under Dr. Nettleton's preaching, and those which occurred at the close of the last, and at the beginning of the present century. Let any one read with attention the narratives published in the first three or four volumes of the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine, and he will obtain a very correct idea of the revivals of which I am speaking. If there was any difference, it was this; that the latter were more powerful and more extensive; that is, they were characterized by more clear and distressing conviction of sin, and in some instances, embraced a larger number of subjects. As to the doctrines which were preached, the means employed, and the character of the religious exercises both of awakened sinners and hopeful converts, there was a marked coincidence. The same may be said as to the permanency of their fruits. A large proportion of the hopeful converts in all these revivals, continued to adorn the christian profession.

These revivals were characterized by great solemnity. Christians were solemn. They were not merely excited and filled with great animation for a season; but they were deeply humbled in view of their past neglects of duty. They mourned over their backslidings, and returned to God with deep contrition. Sensible of their great sinfulness, and of the alarming condition of sinners around them, they felt deeply

solemn, and walked humbly with God. Their minds. it is true, were sometimes filled with great joy, but it was a joy mingled with reverence. They felt that they were in the presence of God, and had no disposition to indulge in vain mirth. They carefully abstained in their conversation, from every thing suited to produce levity or to banish serious thoughts from the minds of the impenitent. The things of eternity lay with great weight on their minds, and had a commanding influence upon all their conduct. When they looked around them, and saw so many of their fellow men perishing in sin, their eyes affected their hearts. They felt in some measure, as did the weeping prophet when he said, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears; that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." With these feelings, they could not but be solemn.

Sinners were solemn. Those who were under conviction were bowed down with distress. They felt like criminals under sentence of death. In some cases, as we have seen, their distress was exceedingly great. And when a revival had become somewhat extensive in a parish the whole community was more or less solemn. The Rev. Dr. Porter of Farmington, speaking of the revival in that town says, "The state of feeling which at this time pervaded the town, was interesting beyond description. There was no commotion, but a stillness in our very streets; a serenity in the aspect of the pious, and a solemnity apparent in almost all, which forcibly impressed us with the conviction that in very deed *God was in this place.*" What is here stated, might be stated with truth in reference to most of the places where revivals became extensive under Dr. Nettleton's labors.

These revivals were characterized by deep and clear convictions of sin. Dr. Nettleton had no confidence in those revivals which dispense with the "law-work." He did not suppose that the work of conviction need be of long continu-

ance. Although in his own case it was protracted through many months, he did not suppose it was always so in cases of genuine conversion; nor ordinarily, when the doctrines of the gospel are fully and plainly preached, and when the obligations of sinners are faithfully pressed upon their consciences. Under his preaching convictions were generally of short continuance; but they were clear, and frequently exceedingly distressing. Sinners were not brought to entertain the hope of salvation, without being awakened to a sense of their lost condition by nature, — nor were they merely alarmed by some vague sense of danger; but they were convinced of sin. They saw themselves in the light of divine truth. Like Peter's hearers on the day of Pentecost, "they were pricked in the heart." "The commandment came, sin revived, and (they) died." They saw what the law of God required. They saw, also, that they never had obeyed it in a single instance, and that their hearts were at enmity against God and not subject to his law. There was, it is true, a difference in the dealings of God with different individuals, in respect to the degree and continuance of their convictions, and the strength and bitterness of their opposition. But in general the convictions of awakened sinners were distinctly marked. In the first stages of their concern, they were usually filled with alarm on account of their past lives. Seeing themselves in danger, they went about to establish their own righteousness; hoping by their abundant religious services to appease the anger of God, and to secure an interest in his favor. But they were soon convinced of the futility of these efforts. The more they strove to make themselves better, the more they saw the worthlessness of their own works. They were brought to see that they were actuated in all that they did by unholy motives; and that so far from growing better, they were adding sin to sin, and sinking deeper and deeper in guilt and wretchedness. Thus they were convinced of their utterly lost condition, and of their entire dependance for salvation on the sovereign mercy of

God. While in this state they were frequently sensible of the most dreadful heart-risings against God.

Although they were convinced of the exceeding sinfulness of such feelings, yet they found themselves disposed to accuse their Maker of injustice in his commands and threatenings, and of partiality in the dispensation of his grace; and when they saw others brought to rejoice in hope, while they were left, it sometimes filled them with the bitterest opposition. These discoveries of the desperate wickedness of their hearts occasioned the most acute distress. In some instances the mental agony was overwhelming. Such extreme distress was generally of short continuance, and in most cases it was succeeded by joy and peace in believing.

In proof of the deep feeling which occurred under Dr. Nettleton's preaching, the reader is referred to the sketch of the revival in Nassau, inserted in a former chapter.

But while Dr. Nettleton considered conviction of sin essential to genuine conversion, and while his preaching and conversation were adapted to give sinners a clear and distressing view of their true character and condition, yet he endeavored to check all *violent manifestations* of feeling, by showing that they had in them nothing of the nature of religion; and when he discovered any tendency to such manifestations in a religious meeting, he would generally dismiss the assembly, and advise the people to retire in silence to their homes.

The converts in these revivals were led in a way they knew not. Darkness was made light before them. Previous to their conversion, their duty had been clearly and faithfully urged upon them. They had been told that God required them immediately to repent, to believe in Christ, and to be holy in heart and life; and that he would be pleased with nothing short of holy obedience. But they were blind to the beauty of holiness. They received not the things of the Spirit of God, for they were foolishness unto them, neither could they know them, because they were spiritually discerned.

Their hearts were opposed to all the spiritual duties which God required. The more they saw of God, of themselves and of the terms of salvation, the more hopeless their condition appeared; and thus their prospects became darker and darker until light broke in from above. They did not feel that they had made themselves to differ from others by any efforts o their own. They did not suppose that they had gone through a process of means while unrenewed, by which they had made themselves new hearts. On the contrary, they knew that they had resisted every overture of mercy, and that all their feelings and moral actions were sinful, to the very moment when their hearts were renewed by the power of the Holy Ghost. Consequently they took none of the glory to themselves. They had no doubt that if they were the children of God, it was owing wholly to his distinguishing grace.

As might be supposed from what has just been stated, the converts in these revivals cordially embraced the doctrines of grace, and were steadfast in their belief of them. They received them, both because they appeared to be clearly taught in the scriptures, and because they were in perfect harmony with their own experience. "They were born into the truth." The knowledge which they had obtained of their own hearts while under conviction, and the wonderful change which had taken place in their views and feelings in relation to divine objects, were all in accordance with the evangelical system, and entirely at variance with the views of those who deny the doctrines of grace. It was no matter of doubt with them whether the natural heart is totally depraved, and unreconciled to God. They *knew* it to be true in reference to themselves, for it had been matter of painful consciousness. They were of course convinced that salvation must be by grace through the redemption of Christ. They trusted alone in his righteousness for justification, and counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord. They were fully convinced of the necessity o

regeneration by the special agency of the Holy Ghost; for they knew that if they had passed from death unto life, they had "been born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." They were also convinced that unless God had from all eternity determined to make some of mankind the trophies of grace, not an individual of the human race would obtain salvation. The doctrine of eternal and particular election, therefore, appeared to them to lie at the foundation of all hope in regard to the salvation of man; and they rejoiced in the assurance that God hath from the beginning chosen some to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth — and in the promise that all true believers shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. The converts were generally so steadfast in their belief of these doctrines, that their faith could not be shaken. They possessed, in an unusual degree, stability of character. They were not carried about by every wind of doctrine, nor often led astray by those who lie in wait to deceive. The religious exercises of the subjects of these revivals, so far as they could be known, were generally such as indicated a *radical* change of character. The whole current of their moral feelings seemed to be changed. What they had hated now they seemed to love. Those objects which had awakened in their bosoms feelings of enmity, were now contemplated with supreme delight. Their affections were not such as could be traced to the operation of any natural principle of the human mind; such as self-love or natural gratitude. They did not love God merely on account of his kindness to them; but on account of the supreme excellency of his character. Their first consolation did not arise from the belief that God had pardoned their sins, and received them to favor, for in most instances when they first found peace they had no apprehensions that their sins were pardoned. When divine objects appeared to them in a new and pleasing light, they scarcely thought of their personal safety, or whether

they were or were not converted. They discovered a relish for divine objects to which they had been total strangers, and the truths of the gospel with which they had been contending were now objects of complacency. It was no uncommon thing for persons whose chief distress had arisen from the thought that they were in the hands of God, to find themselves unexpectedly rejoicing in that very thought, contemplating the glory of God as an object of higher importance than their own salvation; and all this, while as yet they had no idea of having experienced a change of heart. It thus appeared that "the first objective ground" of their religious affections, was "the transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things, as they are in themselves, and not any conceivable relation they bear to self, or self-interest."

What Edwards says of the converts in Northampton, was equally true of those of whom I am speaking. "It has more frequently been so among us, that persons have had the gospel ground of relief for lost sinners discovered to them, and have been entertaining their minds with the sweet prospect, while they have thought nothing at that time of their being converted. There is wrought in them a holy repose of soul in God through Christ, and a sweet disposition to fear and love him, and to hope for blessings from him in this way, and yet they have *no imagination that they are now converted; it does not so much as come into their minds.*"

There are religious affections, and they sometimes rise to a high degree, which are founded in self-love. Persons may think they love God, when their love arises entirely from the belief that God loves them, and that he has pardoned their sins, and given them a title to heaven. But such love is natural to the human heart, and affords no evidence of a supernatural change. "Sinners also love those that love them." Persons may be filled with joy because they have persuaded themselves, without any good reason, that their immortal interests are secured; but such joy is selfish, and partakes not

of the nature of holiness. Sinners may be convinced that in *order to be happy* they must become the servants of God; and they may *resolve*, for the *sole* purpose of securing their happiness to devote themselves to the service of God; and having adopted the opinion that such a resolution is a change of heart, they may experience pleasurable emotions in the thought that they are interested in the divine favor. But such conversions imply no radical change of character, and will not endure the test of the judgment day.

The conversions, in the revivals of which I am speaking, appeared to be widely different from these. If any cases occurred which appeared to be of this description, they were treated as spurious. If any persons professed to have experienced a change of heart, and gave no other evidence than what is afforded by such religious affections as, to use the language of Brainerd, "have self-love for their beginning, centre and end," they were advised to abandon their hopes without delay.

The converts in these revivals were not bold, forward, self-sufficient and censorious; but humble, meek, gentle, and docile. When we see those, who profess to have entered recently upon the christian life, lifted up with pride, wiser in their own estimation than their teachers—disposed to put themselves forward as leaders—abundant in their censures of old professors—full of self-complacency, and self-commendation, there is reason to fear that they know not what manner of spirit they are of. Such is not the spirit of the gospel. "The wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." Our Saviour said, "except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The little child is meek, humble, docile, confiding—and such is the spirit of the real children of God. When those who profess to have become subjects of divine grace, exhibit this spirit,

they give evidence of being what they profess to be. And such appear to have been the converts generally in the revivals of which I am speaking.

These revivals exerted a most benign influence upon the churches. They did not divide churches, and dissolve the relation between pastors and their flocks. On the contrary, they built up churches—healed divisions, where they had previously existed—promoted union and brotherly love among the members, and greatly strengthened the hands of pastors.

One striking effect of these revivals, was to elevate the standard of orthodoxy. Dr. Nettleton preached with great plainness the doctrines of Calvinism. Under his preaching, these doctrines were seen to be the power of God unto salvation. It was in vain to object that they tend to paralyze effort and to harden men in stupidity. They were seen to produce the opposite effect. Sinners were pricked in the heart and brought to repentance. Saints were quickened and comforted, and incited to fidelity in their master's service. The converts, as we have seen, cordially embraced these doctrines, and were confirmed in their belief by their own religious experience. If creeds were altered, it was for the purpose of making them more Calvinistic. In many instances, where violent prejudices had existed against the Calvinistic system, they were overcome; and some churches, which had been very lax in doctrine, became sound in the faith.

These revivals exerted a salutary influence upon society at large. They checked the prevalence of vice, raised the tone of moral sentiment, and elevated the standard of morals. So striking was the evidence that they were not the result of mere human agency, that few could resist the conviction that they were the work of God. In those days, such was the state of the public conscience, that the very name of a revival had wonderful power. Announce to a congregation that a revival had commenced in a neighboring town, and it would produce great solemnity on the whole assembly. The general feeling

seemed to be, God has come nigh to us, and is calling upon us in solemn accents to prepare to meet him. This state of the public mind was the result of a careful observation of the effects of these revivals. They were seen to be good. This leads me to observe once more,

The salutary fruits of these revivals were permanent. They were not temporary excitements which were soon over, and followed by a melancholy reaction; but the good effects were abiding. The converts generally continued to adorn their profession. There were but few apostacies.

Dr. Nettleton, in his letter to Dr. Beecher, inserted in the last chapter, says, "For a number of years I have kept a list of the names of those who have hopefully experienced religion, and made a profession of it in these revivals. I have watched them with anxious solicitude, and have made particular inquiry about the spiritual welfare of each one as opportunity presented. The thousands who have professed Christ, in this time, in general, appear to run well. Hitherto I think they have exhibited more of the christian temper, and a better example, than the same number who have professed religion when there was no revival."

If the reader will recur to the accounts given by ministers of the revivals among their own people, under Dr. Nettleton's preaching, inserted in the preceding chapters, he will perceive that they all bear testimony to the permanent good effects of his labors; and such testimonials might be multiplied to a great extent.

CHAPTER XII.

His opposition to New Measures.

In the year 1826, there was a great religious excitement in the central and western parts of the State of New York, occasioned principally by the labors of the Rev. Charles G. Finney, an evangelist of great zeal, and of considerable native eloquence. He had been a lawyer, and having, as he hoped, been converted to Christ, he entered the ministry, with but little preparatory study. He was bold, ardent, and denunciatory in his manner. He rebuked with harshness and great severity, not only open transgressors, and impenitent sinners of every description, but professors of religion and ministers of the gospel; and was not unfrequently very pointed and personal in his prayers. The consequence was, that he not only met with violent opposition from the open enemies of religion, but many of the most judicious ministers and private christians, felt unwilling to sanction his proceedings. Others became his warm friends and adherents, and imbibing the same spirit, denounced their brethren as "cold and dead, and enemies to revivals." Some young evangelists, in particular, attempting to imitate Mr. Finney, became much more extravagant than their leader. But a great excitement attended the preaching of Mr. Finney and his coadjutors, and multitudes were reported as the subjects of renewing grace. That very many of the reputed converts were like the stony ground hearers, who endured only for a time, few, I presume, will at

this day be disposed to deny. Yet, it is believed, that some were truly converted to Christ.

Connected with this excitement, various measures were introduced, similar to those which in former times had been the great instruments of marring the purity of revivals, and promoting fanaticism—such as praying for persons by name—using great familiarity in prayer—encouraging females to pray and exhort in promiscuous assemblies—calling upon persons to come to the anxious seat, or to rise up in the public assembly to signify that they had given their hearts to God, or had made up their mind to attend to religion. The result was, that where this spirit prevailed, and these measures were introduced, there was division in the churches. Those who adopted these measures, often appealed to the example of Dr. Nettleton, and made use of his name to sanction their proceedings. Those, however, who were acquainted with him and his labors in revivals, knew that these representations were not true. They knew that he never had introduced such measures, nor countenanced such a spirit as was connected with them.

While these things were passing in the central and western parts of the State of New York, Dr. Nettleton, in very feeble health, was laboring in Jamaica, on Long Island. He was from time to time made acquainted with what was transpiring at the west, and was not without great solicitude as to the ultimate results. The lesson which he learned while laboring on the borders of Rhode Island, in those places which had been made desolate by the operations of Davenport and his coadjutors a century ago, had prepared him to resist every thing which tended to corrupt revivals and promote fanaticism.

He heard with inexpressible pain, that his own example was appealed to at the West, to sanction measures which he had always reprobated; still, although constantly urged by some of his friends to come out with a public testimony, he

was very reluctant to do it, nor could he be persuaded to publish his views, till he was fully convinced that a regard to the interests of Christ's kingdom required it.

In the winter of 1826–7, at the earnest request of some of his brethren, he visited Albany, while Mr. Finney was preaching at Troy. He had two interviews with Mr. Finney, hoping that by a free consultation, their views might be brought to harmonize, so far at least, that they might co-operate in promoting the interests of Christ's kingdom. But in this he was painfully disappointed. He found that Mr. Finney was unwilling to abandon certain measures which he had "ever regarded as exceedingly calamitous to the cause of revivals," and which, of course, he could not sanction. He perceived also that there could be no hope of convincing Mr. Finney of his errors, so long as he was upheld and encouraged by ministers of high respectability. After his second interview with Mr. Finney, he addressed a letter to the Rev. Mr. Aikin of Utica, a part of which is here inserted. It is dated, Albany, January 13, 1827.

"Seven years ago, about two thousand souls were hopefully born into the kingdom, in this vicinity, in our own denomination, with comparative stillness. But the times have altered. The kingdom of God now cometh with great observation. Opposition from the world is always to be expected. It is idle for any minister to expect a revival without it. But when it enters the church of God, the friends of Zion cannot but take the alarm.

"There is doubtless a work of grace in Troy. Many sinners have hopefully been born into the kingdom; but it has been at an awful expense. Many of our first ministers have visited the place, to witness for themselves. Such men as Dr. Griffin, Dr. Porter of Catskill, Dr. Nott, Mr. Tucker, Mr. Cornelius, and many more. Some of them have heard a number of sermons. After giving credit for preaching much truth, they uniformly say 'I never heard the names of God

used with such irreverence.' Dr. Griffin gave me a number of specimens. I do not wish to retail them. The church in Troy is greatly divided. Some have taken a dismission; others are consulting neighboring ministers about the path of duty; and others are beginning to attend worship by themselves.

"But the worst is not told. The spirit of denunciation which has grown out of the mode of conducting the revivals at the West, is truly alarming. We do not call in question the genuineness of those revivals, or the purity of the motives of those who have been the most active in them. You, doubtless, are reaping and rejoicing in their happy fruits. But the evils to which I allude, are felt by the churches abroad; members of which have gone out to catch the spirit, and have returned, some grieved, others soured, and denouncing ministers, colleges, theological seminaries, and have set whole churches by the ears, and kept them in turmoil for months together. Some students in divinity have done more mischief in this way then they can ever repair. I could mention names, but for exposing them. Some ministers and professors of religion have been to Troy, from the surrounding region, on purpose to catch the flame, and have returned home, saying, 'We do not want *such* a revival as they have in Troy.' * * * * * * * *

"The evil is running in all directions. A number of churches have experienced a revival of anger, wrath, malice, envy, and evil-speaking, without the knowledge of a single conversion—merely in consequence of a desperate attempt to introduce these new measures. Those ministers and christians who have heretofore been most and longest acquainted with revivals, are most alarmed at the spirit which has grown out of the revivals of the West. This spirit has, no doubt, greatly deteriorated by transportation. As we now have it, the great contest is among professors of religion—a civil war in Zion—a domestic broil in the household of faith.

The friends of brother Finney are certainly doing him and the cause of Christ great mischief. They seem more anxious to convert ministers and christians to their peculiarities, than to convert souls to Christ.

"It is just such a contest as I have sometimes seen, in its incipient stages, in New England, between some young revival ministers on the one side, and whole associations of ministers on the other. The young revival ministers, wishing to extend the work into all the churches, in their zeal would enter the limits of settled pastors, and commence their operations, and plead my own example for all their movements; and so the war would begin. And all those ministers who would not yield the reins and sanction their imprudences, would be sure to be proclaimed as enemies to revivals. Being thus defeated, these young ministers would come to me to make their complaints, and to work on my mind the conviction that all those ministers were enemies to myself; whereas the whole evil lay in a violation of all the rules of ministerial order and christian meekness, or in the inexperience, ignorance, and imprudence of these young ministers. I am sorry to speak thus of my best friends; but it is due to my brethren to say, that those very ministers, who had been thus slandered by my young brethren, have since come to me with tears, urging me to visit their flocks. There is not one of them but would bid me a welcome, and would rejoice in a revival; but they would not invite these young ministers to preach for them, who had been so rash in their proceedings, and guilty of slandering them as stupid, and dead, and enemies of revivals. In this manner, some of the most promising young revival ministers have run themselves out, and lost the confidence of settled pastors and christians in general.

"The spirit of denunciation which has grown out of these western revivals, seems to be owing to the implicit confidence which has been placed in the proceedings of just such young ministers as leaders. They dared not attempt to correct any

of their irregularities, for fear of doing mischief, or of being denounced as enemies to revivals. This I know to be the fact. Brother Finney himself has been scarcely three years in the ministry, and has had no time to look at consequences. He has gone, with all the zeal of a young convert, without a friend to check or guide him. And I have no doubt that he begins with astonishment to look at the evils which are running before him.

"The account which his particular friends give of his proceedings, is, in substance, as follows: He has got ministers to agree with him only by 'crushing,' or 'breaking them down.' The method by which he does it, is by creating a necessity, by getting a few individuals in a church to join him, and then all those who will not go all lengths with him, are denounced as enemies to revivals; and rather than have such a bad name, one and another falls in to defend him; and then they proclaim what ministers, elders, and men of influence, have been 'crushed' or 'broken down.' This moral influence being increased, others are denounced, in a similar manner, as standing out, and leading sinners to hell. And to get rid of the noise, and save himself, another will 'break down.' And so they wax hotter and hotter, until the church is fairly split in twain. And now, as for those elders and christians, who have thus been converted to these measures; some of them are sending out private word to their christian friends abroad, as follows; 'I have been fairly *skinned* by the denunciations of these men, and have ceased to oppose them, to get rid of their noise. But I warn you not to introduce this spirit into your church and society.' And so, brother Finney's supposed friends, men of influence, are sending out word to warn others to beware of the evils which they have experienced. I heartily pity brother Finney, for I believe him to be a good man, and wishing to do good. But nobody dares tell him that a train of causes is set in operation, and urged on by his own friends, which is likely to ruin his usefulness.

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"Whoever has made himself acquainted with the state of things in New England, near the close of the revival in the days of Whitefield and Edwards, cannot but weep over its likeness to the present. It is affecting, that the warm friends of Zion should unwittingly betray her best interests. But so was it then. The young itinerants, in their zeal to extend the work, began to denounce all those settled ministers who would not go all lengths with them. And then those members of churches who loved their pastors would assemble around to defend them; while those who favored the itinerants assembled around them, and imbibing their spirit, of course lost all confidence in a settled ministry: and so the churches were split in twain. The Spirit of God took its flight, and darkness and discord reigned for half a century. And those preachers who had taken the lead, having cultivated such a spirit, began to fall into awful darkness themselves, when they saw the ruin that followed their labors. Some of them made and published their recantations to the world, which are now extant. But it was too late. A retribution followed. Some few of the young converts were called to order by David Brainerd, who passed through Connecticut at that time. But after their recantations, these leaders were generally denounced by their own followers. Could Whitefield, and Edwards, and Brainerd, and Davenport, now arise from the dead, I have no doubt they would exclaim, 'young men, beware! beware!' * * * * *

"Some of brother Finney's younger brethren and friends may attempt to work on his mind the conviction that most of our ministers and churches are enemies to revivals, and unfriendly to himself. I feel it my duty to speak in their behalf. I know it to be a mistake. The best friends of revivals, as they have heretofore witnessed them, are certainly the most afraid to invite him into their churches, and are the most alarmed at the evils that are rising. And, I must say, that

his friends are certainly laboring to introduce those very measures, which I have ever regarded as ultimately working ruin to our churches; and against which I have always guarded as ruinous to the character of revivals, as well as to my own usefulness.

"For example: whoever introduces the practice of females praying in promiscuous assemblies, let the practice once become general, will ere long find, to his sorrow, that he has made an inlet to other denominations, and entailed an everlasting quarrel on those churches generally. If settled pastors choose to do it on their own responsibility, so be it. For one, I dare not assume so great a responsibility. In this way churches were once laid waste. And it is by keeping out, and carefully avoiding every thing of this kind, that some of them have again been built, others kept orderly, and the character of revivals, for *thirty* years past, has been guarded. If the evil be not soon prevented, a generation will arise, inheriting all the obliquities of their leaders, not knowing that a revival ever did or can exist, without all those evils. And these evils are destined to be propagated from generation to generation, waxing worse and worse.

"The friends of brother Finney are afraid to interfere to correct any thing, lest they should do mischief, or be denounced as enemies of revivals. 'Brother Nettleton, do come into this region and help us; for many things are becoming current among us which I cannot approve. And I can do nothing to correct them, but I am immediately shamed out of it, by being denounced as an enemy to revivals.' Thus my ministerial brethren from the West, whose views accord with my own, have been calling to me, in their letters during the summer past. 'There is religion in it, and I dare not touch it. I see the evil, and tremble at the consequences; but what can I do?' This is the language of many of his warmest friends. And so the bad must all be defended with the good. This sentiment adopted, *will certainly ruin revivals.*

It is the language of a novice: it is just as the devil would have it. If the friends of revivals dare not correct their own faults, who will do it for them? I know no such policy. I would no more dare defend in the gross, than condemn in the gross. And those who adopt the former practice, will soon be compelled by prevailing corruptions, to take along with it the latter. The character of revivals is to be sustained on the same principles as that of churches, or individual christians. *If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.* It is not by *covering*, but by *confessing* and *forsaking*, that pure revivals are to prosper. In this manner their character has long been sustained. Things have not been left to run to such lengths in our day. A strong hand has been laid on young converts, old professors, and especially on zealous young ministers, as many of them now living can testify. I have been afraid to kindle fires where there was not some spiritual watchman near, to guard and watch against wildness, for which I might become responsible. Some students in divinity have caught and carried the flame into neighboring towns and villages, and no doubt have been the means of the salvation of some souls. But I am sorry to say, that some of them have run before me into the most populous places, and have carried their measures so far, and have become so dictatorial and assuming, that, in the opinion of the most judicious and influential ministers of my acquaintance, they have done far more mischief than good. They have pleaded my example for many measures, which, as to time and circumstances, I utterly condemn. Some of the means which I have never dared to employ except in the most interesting crisis of a powerful revival, they have caricatured in such a manner, and raised such prejudices against myself among strangers, that they have caused me much trouble. My plans have been laid to visit many towns and cities, and have been wholly defeated by these students in divinity thus running before me. I have been much grieved, and exceedingly per-

plexed on this subject. They assume an authority, unwittingly I allow, and adopt measures, which no ordained minister could do, without ruining his usefulness. Evils arising hence, have uniformly been arrested in their progress, by my taking the part of settled pastors among their flocks; at a great expense of feeling, on the part of my young friends, no doubt; but the cause of revivals evidently required it.

"I have been anxiously looking and waiting, all summer long, for such men as yourself and Mr. Lansing, and others most intimately acquainted with brother Finney, to take hold, with a kind severity, and restore order; but in vain. It is not expected that a powerful revival can exist among imperfect beings, without more or less irregularity and opposition; but it is expected that these things will generally subside, and leave the churches in a more peaceful, happy, and flourishing state than ever. This has uniformly been the case, where revivals have prevailed. But irregularities are prevailing so fast, and assuming such a character, in our churches, as infinitely to overbalance the good that is left. These evils, sooner or later, must be corrected. Somebody must speak, or silence will prove our ruin. Fire is an excellent thing in its place, and I am not afraid to see it blaze among briers and thorns; but when I see it kindling where it will ruin fences, and gardens, and houses, and burn up my friends, I cannot be silent.

"Had the evil been checked in the commencement, it would have been an act of kindness to brother Finney, and great gain to the cause of revivals. He would have found ministers every where bidding him welcome. His help is every where greatly needed. For a settled pastor, the entire confidence of other ministers would not be so important. But, whoever undertakes to promote revivals, by running through the world, in this age of revivals, must have the entire confidence of settled ministers generally; otherwise he will unsettle ministers, and desolate churches, wherever he goes. Without their

hearty co-operation, he will certainly labor at great disadvantage: as if a mariner, steering his ship in a storm at sea, in his zeal should quit the helm, and ply his strength at the mast.

"The practice of praying for people by name, in the closet, and the social circle, has no doubt had a beneficial effect. But, as it now exists in many places, it has become, in the eye of the christian community at large, an engine of public slander in its worst form. I should not dare, in this solemn manner, to arraign a fellow-sinner before a public assembly, without his own particular request, unless my expressions were of the most conciliatory kind. And no christian minister, whatever his character may be, can adopt the practice, without awakening the indignation of the world at large, and of christians generally, against him. Much less can it be done by any body, and every body, who takes it into his head positively to decide the question, and to tell God and the world, that such and such persons are unconverted. I do not believe, whatever may be the effect upon the individual thus named, that God will regard such a prayer in any other light than as that of a proud, self-righteous Pharisee.

"There is another interesting topic that lies near my heart; but the time would fail me to express my views and feelings on the subject. That holy, humble, meek, modest, retiring form, sometimes called the Spirit of Prayer, and which I have ever regarded as the unfailing precursor of a revival of religion, has been dragged from her closet, and so rudely handled by some of her professed friends, that she has not only lost all her wonted loveliness, but is now stalking the streets in some places stark mad.

"Some, in their zeal on the subject of the *prayer of faith*, are tormenting others with their peculiar sentiments, which, if correct, every body sees must equally condemn themselves; thus rendering themselves and their sentiments perfectly ridiculous.

"I have given you but an imperfect sketch of my own and the views of our brethren abroad on this subject; but I assure you, as a whole, it is not overdrawn. How to correct these growing evils I cannot tell. Our brethren, far and near, some of brother Finney's best friends at the West not excepted, by letter and otherwise, have long been urging me to lay the subject fully before him. The evils which have existed abroad have certainly been very much concealed from him and his friends. It is certainly right that he should know something of the evils which have run from under him; and the feelings of the friends of Zion at large. I have nothing to say to him in the style of crimination or controversy. I have been too long on the field of battle to be frightened about little things, or to make a man an offender for a word. For Zion's sake, I wish to save brother Finney from a course which I am confident will greatly retard his usefulness before he knows it. It is no reflection on his talents or piety, that, in his zeal to save souls, he should adopt every measure which promises present success, regardless of consequences; nor, after a fair experiment in so noble a cause, to say, I have pushed some things beyond what they will bear. The most useful lessons are learned by experience.

"I wish I had health and strength to show brother Finney my whole heart on this subject. I have long been wishing to correct some of his peculiarities, that I might invite him into my own field and introduce him to my friends. Aside from feeble health, one consideration only has prevented me from making the attempt. Some of his particular friends are urging him on to the very things which I wish him to drop. I fear that their flattering representations will overrule all that I can say. And having dropped these peculiarities, his labors for a while might be less successful; and then he would resort again to the same experiment. But I can inform him, that the same measures which he has adopted, have been vigorously and obstinately pursued in New England, against the

repeated advice of settled pastors, and that too, by one of the most powerful and successful ministers that I have ever known, until confident of his own strength, he quit them all, with this expression, 'We will see who will answer by fire'— a most unhappy expression, as he afterwards told me with tears. The result was, he lost his usefulness in our denomination. Some of his spiritual children, now excellent men in the ministry, have never dared to adopt his measures, but have uniformly opposed them. Others, some ministers and laymen, who followed him, became disorganizers; and the leader himself turned Baptist, and soon after died.

There is another method of conducting revivals, which may avoid these difficulties. Settled pastors occupy nearly the whole field of operation. They have, and ought to have, the entire management in their own congregation. Each one has a right to pursue his own measures, within his own limits; and no itinerant has any business to interfere or dictate. It will ever be regarded as intermeddling in other men's matters. If they do not choose to invite me into their field, my business is meekly and silently to retire. And I have no right to complain. But many young men are continually violating the rules of ministerial order and christian propriety in these respects. Impatient to see the temple rise, they are now doing that, which, it appears to me, will tend ultimately, more than any thing else, to defeat the end which they wish to accomplish. They are now pulling down, in many places, the very things which I have been helping ministers to build up; and for which I have often received their warmest thanks. It is a sentiment which I have had frequent occasion to repeat to my young brethren in the ministry, 'Better forego the prospect of much present good, in your own opinion, than to lose the confidence of settled ministers, without which you cannot be long and extensively useful.'

"There is, certainly, another and a lawful point of attack on the kingdom of darkness, which, when you have taken, and

it is seen, possesses wonderful advantages. It will give no offence to the church of God. It will be sure to rally around you every faithful soldier of the cross. Though it may seem too slow and silent in its operation, yet, being the lawful method of conducting this warfare, it will secure the confidence of ministers and christians, the consciences of the wicked, and a crown of glory.

"And now, brother, I have ventured to lay before you the subject of my prayers and tears, and I may add, the subject which brought me back to a region which I never expected to visit again. If you discover any thing in this communication unchristian or unkind, you will pardon it. If, in your opinion, it can do no mischief, or will do any possible good, you are at full liberty to show it to brother Finney, or any of the friends of Zion whom it may concern. We will lay the subject at the feet of our Divine Master, and there will we leave it.

Yours, in the best of bonds."

The letter from which the foregoing extracts are taken, with some other documents, was published in a pamphlet in 1828. In a note appended to it, Dr. Nettleton says—

"The above letter was written sometime last December, immediately after a second interview with Mr. Finney. From personal conversation with himself, but more particularly with his friends, I learned that they had adopted and defended measures which I have ever regarded as exceedingly calamitous to the cause of revivals.

"This letter was written originally as an expression of my own views, and the views of my brethren generally, on this subject, without intending to send it to any one. As my opinion was repeatedly solicited on this subject, by the friends of Mr. F., I thought it best to give it in writing. Accordingly, this letter was read at different times, to not less than twenty ministers, and to some who had adopted the measures in question In this silent manner, I labored for a number of weeks

hoping to persuade the latter to drop them; but to my surprise I found that my own name was continually employed to give them sanction; nor was it in my power to prevent this perversion, without publishing my views to the world.

"As preparatory to publishing, and to cut off occasion for after complaints, it was thought best that I should delay no longer sending a communication to some one or more of our brethren in the Oneida Presbytery. The above 'document' is one, and only a small part of what I have written to the members of that body. What I have done in laying the subject before them, was not done without the knowledge and approbation of the watchmen of Israel, the long, the tried, the acknowledged friends of Zion."

The letter, although addressed to Mr. Aikin, was intended for the perusal of Mr. Finney and his friends. Soon after it was received, Mr. Finney prepared and preached at Utica, a sermon on the text, "How can two walk together except they be agreed." This sermon was understood to be a vindication of the things complained of in Dr. Nettleton's letter. It was afterwards preached in Troy and published. Dr. Nettleton made some remarks on this sermon, in a letter addressed to the Rev. Dr. Spring, of New York, which was first published in the New York Observer, and afterwards in the above-mentioned pamphlet. I make the following extracts.

"DURHAM, N. Y., May 4th, 1827.

"My Dear Brother,

"I have read brother Finney's sermon, from the words, 'How can two walk together except they be agreed?' The principle, on which it rests, is contained in the following sentences:

"'If any thing even, upon the same subject, that is far above or below our tone of feeling, is presented; and if our affections remain the same, and refuse to be enlisted and brought to that point, we must feel uninterested, and perhaps grieved

and offended. If the subject be exhibited in a light that is below our present tone of feelings, we cannot be interested till it come up to our feelings. If this does not take place, we necessarily remain uninterested. If the subject be presented in a manner that is far above our tone of feeling, and our affections grovel, and refuse to rise, it does not fall in with, and feed our affections; therefore we cannot be interested; it is enthusiasm to us, we are displeased with the warmth in which our affections refuse to participate; and the farther it is above our temperature, the more are we disgusted. These are truths to which the experience of every man will testify, as they hold good upon every subject, and under all circumstances, and are founded upon principles that are incorporated with the very nature of man.'

"Now all this, so far as christians and true religion are concerned, I take to be false in theory, contrary to fact, and dangerous in its consequences. Present to the mind of the christian, whose *holiness* and flaming zeal shall equal that of Paul, the least degree of holiness in any saint, and he will not be offended, but interested. He would be greatly delighted with even 'babes in Christ.' And the higher the tone of his piety and holy feeling, the greater will be his delight, even 'upon the same subject.' Now, raise the tone of pious feeling up to that of the spirits of just men made perfect, and holy angels, and still they will not lose their interest, 'even upon the same subject.' They will rejoice even over one sinner that repenteth, far more than will those whose feelings fall to the level of the penitent himself.

"Nor is it true that christians are always better pleased with those, whose tone of feeling is on a level with their own. The least saint on earth loves holiness in others, and rejoices in their growth in grace. And he loves those most, whose tone of holy feeling is raised farthest above him; and for the same reason, he loves the Saviour more than all. Every child of God, who reads his bible, is better pleased with the high

toned piety of Job, and Daniel, and David, and Isaiah, and Paul, than he is with that of other saints, whose piety falls below theirs, or to the level of his own. What christian can read the memoirs of Edwards and Brainerd, without deep interest? I know of no christian that does not read them with far greater interest than he would have done, had they exhibited far less of the spirit of christianity. And though christians feel condemned, by their high-toned piety, yet for this very reason, they are not 'offended and grieved,' but love them the more. Though christians are not up to the tone of piety exhibited by David and Paul, Edwards and Brainerd, yet they are highly delighted, and could walk together with them.

"Again, take the example of our Saviour. No christian on earth is better pleased with any other. Though many of his friends have died and gone to heaven, whom he still loves, yet the Christian can say, 'whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.' The tone of the Saviour's pious and holy feeling is raised far above that of all his followers. Hence, according to the sentiment of the sermon, he could have had no followers on earth, and can have none now. All his disciples must have been '*displeased* with his warmth.' And the higher it rose 'above their temperature, the more they must have been *disgusted*.'

"Present to the mind of the christian the holy character of God. Is not this subject far above the tone of the feelings of any man? Now according to the sentiment of the sermon, if our affections are not brought to that point, we must feel 'uninterested, grieved and offended.' According to the principle of his own sermon, brother Finney and his friends cannot walk with God, for they are not agreed. It must be acknowledged, that God has an infinitely higher tone and degree of holy feeling than brother Finney. He is not 'up to it.' Consequently, on his own principles, they cannot be agreed. God is displeased with him, and he with God. Brother Fin-

ney must '*necessarily*' be displeased with high and holy zeal in his Maker, which so infinitely transcends his own; and the 'farther it is above his temperature, the more he will be *disgusted*.' 'These are truths,' he observes, 'to which the experience of every man will testify, as they hold good upon *every subject*, and under all circumstances, and are founded upon principles that are incorporated with the very nature of man.' * * * * * * * * * *

"The sermon in question entirely overlooks the nature of true religion. It says not one word by which we can distinguish between true and false zeal, true and false religion. If the tone of feeling can only be raised to a certain pitch, then all is well. The self-righteous, the hypocrite, and all who are inflated with pride, will certainly be flattered and pleased with such an exhibition; especially if they are very self-righteous and very proud. False affections often rise far higher than those that are genuine; and this every preacher, in seasons of revival, has had occasion to observe and correct. And the reason of their great height is obvious. There are no salutary checks of conscience, no holy, humble exercises to counteract them in their flight. And they court observation. 'A pharisee's trumpet shall be heard to the town's end, when simplicity walks through the town unseen.' If the preacher is not extremely careful to distinguish between true and false affections, the devil will certainly come in and overset the work, and bring it into disgrace. False zeal and overgrown spiritual pride, will rise up and take the management, and condemn *meekness and humility*, and trample upon all the christian graces, because they are not 'up to it.'

"Matters of fact which have passed under my own observation, might serve as illustration. I have often seen it; and the preacher who has not been tried with this subject, and learned to correct it, has not got his first lesson.

"Leaving out of the question the *nature of true* religion, as brother Finney has done out of his sermon, there is a sense in

which his theory perfectly accords with experience and matters of fact. So far as false zeal and false affections are concerned, the principle of the sermon is correct. A and B are very zealous, and extremely self-righteous; and being equally so, they can walk together, for they are agreed. Both having come up to the same tone of feeling with brother Finney in his sermon;—now they are all agreed, and all pleased, having done all that the preacher required. Now the zeal of A 'strikes far above the tone of feeling' in his fellow, and both are 'displeased, grieved, and offended.' B does not come to the tone of A and 'therefore he cannot be interested; it is enthusiasm—he is displeased with the warmth in which his affections refuse to participate; and the farther it is above his temperature, the more he is disgusted.' The christian and the hypocrite may come up to the *same tone of feeling;* and yet they cannot walk together, for *other* reasons. The character of their affections differs as widely as light and darkness. And the higher their affections rise, the wider the distance between them. And no tone or degree of feeling can possibly bring them together. Every effort of the preacher to unite them by raising the tone of feeling, will only increase the difficulty. This, too, accords with experience and matters of fact. Hence, those who adopt the same creed, and belong to the same communion, can have no fellowship. Though they are up to the same tone of feeling, and feel *deeply*, yet they cannot walk together, for they do not feel *alike*. Feelings which are not founded on *correct* theology cannot be *right* They must *necessarily* be spurious, or merely animal.

"Without great care and close discrimination, the preacher will unwittingly justify all the quarrels and divisions in our churches. The church at Corinth valued themselves on their great spirituality, and high attainments in religion. Now on the principle of the sermon in question, their divisions and quarrels could be no evidence to the contrary, but much in their favor. Each one esteeming others worse than himself,

would conclude that the whole difficulty lay in their not coming up to the tone of his own feelings. And this sermon would have confirmed them all in their good opinion of themselves. But *Paul* told them that the very contrary was true. 'For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men.' Without the same care, the preacher will condemn others for keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; and for 'being of one accord and of one mind.' *That peace*, and harmony, and order, in which Paul so much rejoiced, will be disturbed, and broken, and trampled upon, by disorganizing spiritual pride, under a pretence that all are 'cold, and carnal, and stupid, and dead, and not up to the spirit of the times.' All who are thus inflated, will take the advantage of this sermon, and be sure to construe all opposition to their own disorganizing movements and measures, into an evidence of superior piety in themselves. And all false converts, and others inflated with spiritual pride, will join them, if great care be not taken to discriminate between true and false zeal, and to give the distinguishing marks of both. Spiritual pride will often court opposition, and glory in it, and sometimes adopt the sentiment, 'The more opposition the better.' * * * * * * *

"All who are acquainted with the history of facts on the subject, know that it was on the principles of the sermon in question, that the revival was run out in the time of Edwards, and in Kentucky and Tennessee, rising of twenty years since. And all those ministers who do not discriminate between true and false zeal, true and false affections, in their preaching and conversation, and make that difference, and hold it up to the view of the world, if possible, clear as the sun, heartily approving of the one, and as heartily and publicly condemning the other, will turn out to be the greatest traitors to the cause of revivals. They become responsible not only for the sentiment in question, but also for all the corruptions which prevail in consequence of this neglect. The neglect of ministers to

correct these evils for fear of doing mischief, or of being denounced as carnal and cold-hearted, or as enemies to revivals, is extremely puerile and wicked. On the same principle they must not attempt to correct intemperance and profane swearing in church members, lest they should be ranked among the wicked, as infidels and enemies to christianity. The sentiment in question would, if carried out into all its consequences, defend every abomination in religion that could be named. It would soon come to this: that the only evidence that ministers are cold, and carnal, and stupid, and dead, is, that they cannot approve of every art, and trick, and abominable practice in laymen, women, and children, in their attempts to promote a revival. And their approbation of all these abominations would be taken as a good sign, and as an evidence that they are *awake*. Whereas none but carnal and cold-hearted ministers would be influenced by such mean motives. It is only a trick of the devil, to frighten the watchman of Israel from his post, that he may get possession of it himself; or, what he would like still better, by such base motives to entoil and enlist him in his service, by compelling him to adopt his own measures. So did not Paul. His two epistles to the Corinthians contain little else than a humbling disclosure of abominable practices and quarrels about men and measures in promoting a revival. So did not Edwards. Though he was denounced at first, he could not be frightened; but frightened his denouncers, some of them at least, into a public recantation. A denouncing spirit is that with which *real* christians have no fellowship, and are bound to shun.

"Without regard to the admonition, 'take heed to thyself,' the preacher will be in danger of trampling upon the divine direction, 'In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.'

"'The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men.' 'Be kindly affectioned, be pitiful, be courteous.' He will be in great danger of condemning the 'meek-

ness and gentleness of Christ,' under the names of 'carnal policy' and 'hypocritical suavity of manner.' The preacher should be extremely cautious what he says against 'wisdom and prudence,' as a mark of 'puffing up' in his brethren; lest he trample upon the authority of his Divine Master, in the precept given him upon the same point: — 'Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore *wise* as serpents and *harmless* as doves.' His precept is founded on the fact that wicked men may become more offended with what is *wrong* in manner, than with what is *right* in matter. Hence the preacher may lose their consciences, and the devil has gained the victory. If the wicked *will* oppose, it becomes us to be careful how we furnish them with successful weapons against us. If we regard the direction of Christ, even though they rage, we may still keep our hold upon their consciences; and so long as we can do this, we need not despair of the victory. But when the preacher has lost the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove, the contest will end in a sham-fight, and the sooner he quits the field the better.

"Paul would allow none to be teachers but those of 'full age, who by reason of use have their senses exercised to *discern* both good and evil.' Hence he would not license young converts to preach. 'Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into condemnation, reproach, and the snare of the devil.' So far as his *message* was concerned, the apostle himself went forth, 'saluting no man by the way' — 'not as pleasing men.' Aside from the *simple truth* of that message, no man was ever more yielding and flexible in manner and measures. 'Give no offence, neither to the Jews, neither to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.' 'Even as *I please all men* in *all things* — that they may be saved.' 'I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.' Was this 'carnal policy?' and was Paul 'in a very *cold* state when he wrote that?'

"The wisdom of the measures adopted and recommended by Paul, appear from the fact that sinners may be more offended with what is *wrong* in manner than with what is *right* in matter. If the preacher does not hold a balance between conscience and depravity, he can do nothing. The very fact that the unrenewed heart is so opposed to God and the gospel, has by some been assigned as a reason for stirring up all its opposition. Whereas, aside from the simple exhibition of divine *truth*, Paul adopted a method directly the opposite. If the vigilance of human depravity should exceed the vigilance of the preacher in his manner and measures, by this very means he will quiet the consciences of his hearers. Regardless of his manner, Paul would have lost his hold on the consciences of sinners, and needlessly and wickedly have sent his hearers to a returnless distance from the gospel. This made him exceedingly careful 'lest he should hinder the gospel of Christ.' Since mankind *will* oppose, we should be careful not to put weapons of successful defense into their hands. While they oppose, we should be careful to keep their consciences on our side.

"A powerful religious excitement badly conducted, has ever been considered by the most experienced ministers and best friends of revivals, to be a great calamity. Without close discrimination, an attempt to raise the tone of religious feeling will do infinite mischief. This was the manner of false teachers. 'They zealously affect you, but not well.' It will be like that of Paul before his conversion, and like that of the Jews who were never converted, 'a zeal of God but not according to knowledge.' The driving will become like the driving of Jehu, 'Come, see my zeal for the Lord.' The storm, and earthquake, and fire, are dreadful: but God is not there.

"The design of these remarks is to show the infinite importance of distinguishing between true and false zeal,—true and false affections.

"On reading the sermon in question, I was reminded of the repeated complaints which for some time past I have heard from the most judicious, experienced and best revival ministers in the West; the substance of which is as follows: 'There are various errors in the mode of conducting revivals in this region, which ought to be distinctly pointed out. That on the prayer of faith. This talking to God as a man talks to his neighbor, is truly shocking—telling the Lord a long story about A or B, and apparently with no other intent than to produce a kind of stage effect upon the individual in question, or upon the audience generally. This mouthing of words; those deep and hollow tones, all indicative that the person is speaking into the ears of man, and not to God. I say nothing of the nature of the petitions often presented; but *the awful irreverence of the manner!* How strange that good men should so far forget themselves, as evidently to play tricks in the presence of the great God.'

"'I have often been struck with this circumstance in the mode of preaching, that nothing was heard of the danger of a spurious conversion. For months together, the thought never seemed to be glanced at, that there was any such thing as a satanic influence in the form of religion, but only as openly waging war against all religion. Such a character as an enthusiastic hypocrite, or a self-deceived person, seemed never to be once dreamed of. The only danger in the way of salvation was *coldness, deadness and rank opposition.* On no occasion did the eye ever seem to be turned to another quarter in the heavens.'

"The last paragraph contains the thought to which I allude. The sermon in question bears striking marks of the same character. It is an important part of a preacher's duty in a season of powerful revival, to discriminate between true and false conversion. Without this, every discerning christian knows that the work will rapidly degenerate. The most flaming

spiritual pride will be taken for the highest moral excellence, and will rise up and take the lead.

"Preachers who have not guarded well this avenue in seasons of powerful excitement, have always done more to arrest, and disgrace, and run out revivals, than all the cold-hearted professors and open enemies of religion together. It was this neglect in some zealous preachers, that run out the revival in the days of Edwards, and which led him to write his Treatise on the Religious Affections.

* * * * * * * * *

"It is of the highest importance that the preacher present to his hearers the distinguishing marks of true religion, the graces of the Spirit, in all their native loveliness; and at the same time, that he detect and expose every counterfeit. Having done this, he may labor with all his might to *bring them up to the highest possible tone.* He may exhort them to the exercise of 'Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; and to be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another. That they walk with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. That they let nothing be done through strife, or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Likewise ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.' He may exhort them 'to put on, as the elect of God,—and be covered all over with these shining graces,—bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all things, put

on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.' He may set their hearts all on fire with that heavenly Form—'so pure, so peaceable, so gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy:'—that is so 'long-suffering, so kind, envieth not, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and never faileth.' These are the prevailing characteristics of a revival of religion. Their absence cannot be compensated by flaming zeal.

"Nor is it sufficient that these and all other Christian graces be exhibited, and their counterfeit exposed in theory alone. For so hypocrites will claim them all as their own. Profession is not principle. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' 'Who is a wise man? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.'

'Easy indeed it were to reach
A mansion in the courts above,
If watery floods and fluent speech,
Might serve instead of faith and love.'

"The most important part of the preacher's duty is, to exhibit the evidence of their existence in the heart, by corresponding actions in the life. And this, too, by being 'ensamples to the flock;' and by carefully copying the example of his Divine Master, 'beseeching them by the *meekness* and *gentleness* of Christ.'

"As the time would fail me to complete the subject, Edwards may, in part, supply this deficiency in brother Finney's sermon. I would therefore take this opportunity to recommend to all young converts a careful perusal of his account of the revival in New England, *fourth part*, and what he says on the marks of true humility and spiritual pride, of which the following is a brief abstract:

"Spiritual pride disposes one to speak much of the faults of others, and with bitterness, or with levity, and an air of contempt. Pure christian humility rather disposes a person to be silent about them, or to speak of them with grief and pity. Spiritual pride is very apt to suspect others; an humble saint is most jealous of himself. The spiritually proud person is apt to find fault with others that are low in grace, and to be much in observing how cold and dead they be, and crying out of them and sharply reproving them for it. The humble christian has so much to do at home, with his own heart, that he is not apt to be very busy with the hearts of others, and is apt to esteem others better than himself, and to take most notice of what is good in them, while he takes most notice of what is wrong in himself. In his clearest discoveries of God's glory, and in his most rapturous frames, he is most overwhelmed with a sense of his own vileness, and feels the deepest self-abasement.

"It is a mark of spiritual pride, when any are disposed to speak of what they see amiss in others, in the most harsh, severe, and terrible language; saying of their opinions, or conduct, or advice, of their coldness, their silence, their caution, their moderation, and their prudence, that they are from the *devil*, or from *hell*; that such a thing is devilish, or hellish, or cursed, and the like; so that the words *devil* and *hell* are almost continually in their mouths. And especially, when such language is used towards ministers of the gospel, and others whose age or station entitles them to particular respect. Humility leads the christian to treat others that are in fault, with meekness and gentleness, as Christ did his disciples, and particularly Peter, when he had shamefully denied him.

"Spiritual pride disposes to affect singularity in manner and appearance, for the purpose of attracting observation. Humility disposes the christian to avoid every thing which is likely to draw upon him the observation of others, and to be singular only where he cannot be otherwise without the neg-

lect of a plain and positive duty. Spiritual pride commonly occasions a certain *stiffness* and inflexibility in persons, in their own judgment and their own ways. Humility inclines to a yielding, pliable disposition. The humble christian is disposed to yield to others, and conform to them, and please them, in every thing but sin.

"Spiritual pride disposes persons to stand at a distance from others, as better than they. The humble christian is ready to look upon himself as more unworthy than others, yet he does not love the appearance of an open separation from visible christians; and will carefully shun every thing that looks like distinguishing himself as more humble, or in any respect better than others.

"The eminently humble christian is clothed with lowliness, mildness, meekness, gentleness of spirit and behavior, and with a soft, sweet, condescending, winning air and deportment. Humility has no such thing as roughness, or contempt, or fierceness, or bitterness, in its nature, which things are marks of spiritual pride; as are also invectives and censorious talk concerning particular persons for their opposition, hypocrisy, delusion, pharisaism, and the like.

"Spiritual pride takes great notice of opposition and injuries that are received, and is often speaking of them. Humility disposes a person rather to be, like his blessed Lord when reviled, dumb, not opening his mouth. The more clamorous and furious the world is against him, the more silent and still will he be.

"Spiritual pride leads those who are reproached, to be more bold and confident, and to go greater lengths in that for which they are blamed. Humility leads to improve the reproaches of enemies as an occasion of serious self-examination.

"Spiritual pride leads to a certain unsuitable and self-confident boldness before God and man. Humility leads to the opposite.

"*Assuming* is a mark of spiritual pride: putting on the airs of a master, to whom it belongs to dictate. Humility leads the christian to take the place of a learner, to be 'swift to hear, slow to speak.' The eminently humble christian thinks he wants help from every body, whereas he that is spiritually proud, thinks every body wants his help. Christian humility, under a sense of others' misery, entreats and beseeches; spiritual pride affects to command and warn with authority.

"If young ministers had great humility, it would dispose them especially to treat aged ministers with respect and reverence, as their fathers, notwithstanding that a sovereign God may have given them greater success than they have had.

"It is a mark of spiritual pride to refuse to enter into discourse or reasoning with such as are considered carnal men, when they make objections and inquiries. Humility would lead ministers to condescend to carnal men, as Christ has condescended to us, to bear with our unteachableness and stupidity, and still follow us with instructions, line upon line, precept upon precept, saying, 'come, let us *reason* together;' it would lead to a compliance with the precept, 'Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a *reason* of the hope that is in you with *meekness* and fear.'

"Such are some of the marks of spiritual pride and true humility pointed out by President Edwards. The abstract is given as much as possible in his own words. The whole of what he says on the subject deserves the most serious consideration.

"The friends of religion have been so much gratified with that beautiful hymn by Newton, that I shall venture to insert it in my letter:

TRUE AND FALSE ZEAL.

"Zeal is that pure and heavenly flame
The fire of love supplies;
While that which often bears the name,
Is self in a disguise.

True zeal is merciful and mild,
Can pity and forbear;
The false is headstrong, fierce and wild,
And breathes revenge and war.

While zeal for truth the Christian warms,
He knows the worth of peace;
But self contends for names and forms,
Its party to increase.

Zeal has attained its highest aim,
Its end is satisfied,
If sinners love the Saviour's name,
Nor seeks it aught beside.

But self however well employed,
Has its own ends in view;
And says, as boasting Jehu cried,
'Come, see what I can do.'

Dear Lord, the idol self dethrone,
And from our hearts remove;
And let no zeal by us be shown,
But that which springs from love."

Your affectionate brother,

ASAHEL NETTLETON.'

"Rev. Dr. SPRING."

The publication of the foregoing letters subjected Dr. Nettleton to great reproach. Many, however, who were at that time disposed to blame him, have long since been convinced, not only that he was actuated by a conscientious regard to the honor of God, and the good of Zion, but that he evinced great wisdom and foresight.

There were those at that period, whose views accorded with his own, and who entirely approved of his course. The following testimonial appeared in the New York Observer.

"BOSTON, Nov. 8, 1827.

"It having been represented to some of the subscribers, that we disapproved of the proceedings of the Rev. Mr. Nettleton, in reviewing a sermon preached at Troy, March 4,

1827, and in opposing the sentiments and practices which it seemed intended to vindicate and extend; we regard ourselves as called upon by a sense of duty to say, that the proceedings of Mr. Nettleton, appear to us to have been characterized by uncommon intellectual vigor, correct and comprehensive views of the interests of the church, and by distinguished wisdom, fidelity, firmness, and benevolence, well adapted to promote the interests of pure religion throughout the land."

Signed,

LYMAN BEECHER,	JUSTIN EDWARDS,
A. S. NORTON,	HEMAN HUMPHREY,
WILLIAM R. WEEKS,	C. J. TENNEY,
H. R. WEED,	J. HAWES.

The views expressed in the foregoing testimonial were the views entertained by the Congregational ministers generally in New England, and by a large proportion of the Presbyterian ministers in the United States.

I have before me several letters written by the late Rev. Dr. Richards, Professor of Divinity in the Theological Seminary at Auburn, from which it appears that he sympathized deeply with Dr. Nettleton on the subject of new measures. The following was written, after having read in manuscript the letter to Mr. Aiken, from which some extracts are inserted at the beginning of this chapter.

"AUBURN, Feb. 22d, 1827.

"My Dear Brother—

"At what a solemn crisis have we at length arrived, and how strange it is, that some who appear to be among the best friends of God, should adopt opinions and practices, which are likely to be of such deleterious consequence. Surely this should carry us to the throne of the Great King, and excite us to the most humble and earnest supplication. But is this all? It appears to me that it is time for the sober friends of revivals, to lift up their voice, and to declare distinctly, their views of

the present state of things, and of the causes which have led to it. I perfectly concur with Dr. Beecher, and yourself, on this subject.

"As to the novel measures, which have been adopted in relation to revivals, my opinion has all along been precisely what it is now, except that I supposed at first, they were the offspring of extraordinary excitement, and would probably be relinquished as the excitement should subside. But presently, however, I began to think there was ground to fear that the abettors of them were acting from erroneous speculations on the subject, and that their operations were matter of deliberate contrivance, and would probably be pursued as part of a system. At every step of their progress, I became more convinced that they had a plan, the result of new and extraordinary light, and that their object was, to revolutionize the churches. Of late, I have had no doubt that my apprehensions were well founded; and I shall be disappointed if any private reasoning or remonstrance shall produce any important effect upon the minds of those good brethren, who have, in my judgment, become erratic in this matter. * * * * *

My opinion is, that your letter to the Rev. Mr. Aiken, ought to be immediately published. Your long acquaintance with revivals, and the success which has attended your efforts, will give weight to your opinions; and if the public will not hear your voice, they will hear nobody. But they *will* hear it, and you must speak, though others should rejoin.

"My brethren, the professors, all unite in the most cordial salutations.

Respectfully and affectionately yours,

JAMES RICHARDS."

"Rev. A. Nettleton."

In another letter dated June 23d, 1827, Dr. Richards says, "Your review of Mr. Finney's sermon, has gone to the very core of the business, and will surely be effective in dissipating

much of the illusion which is connected with these mournful innovations. They call it *severe*, but I call it *just*, and as timely as it is just. I think you may greatly felicitate yourself, for having written just such a thing. In my judgment the cause of truth demanded it. The sermon was founded upon a principle, which, if admitted, would sanction every species of wildness and enthusiasm;—or if it did not *directly sanction*, it would furnish a *defense* for the greatest extravagance that ever disgraced the religious world."

The Rev. Dr. Porter, of Catskill, in a letter dated June 14th, 1827, and published in the pamphlet which contains Dr. Nettleton's letters to Mr. Aiken, and Dr. Spring, says, "Whatever might have been Mr. Finney's design, it is perfectly clear to my understanding, that the principle laid down and advocated in his sermon, opens the door for the introduction of all those extravagances, so often witnessed in religious conferences and prayer meetings, and that Mr. Nettleton's remarks on said sermon are in point; and that they have no severity beyond the demands of sober truth. Mr. Nettleton has done what a faithful minister of the gospel, and a friend to revivals of religion, and one who has had so much experience in them, was in duty bound to do." In the same letter he says, "In respect to Mr. Nettleton's remarks on Mr. Finney's sermon, Dr. Griffin is willing to have it said and published, that he considers the remarks '*just what they should be.*' He also mentions the names of a number of other distinguished ministers, whose views he knew to agree with his own, as Drs. Hyde, Shepard, Spring, Blatchford, McAuley, and Messrs. Tomb, Prime, Lyman, Rogers," &c.

In the note appended to the letter addressed to Mr. Aiken, Dr. Nettleton speaks of that letter as being one of several which were written by him to members of the Oneida Presbytery. I have before me, imperfect copies of three long letters which were never published, two of which were addressed

to the Rev. John Frost, of Whitesborough, and one to the Rev. Messrs. Frost and Coe. There is much in these letters that is interesting, and would my limits permit, I should be glad to make copious extracts. The following is from a letter to Mr. Frost, dated Durham, N. Y. March 28, 1827.

"You think that the ministers in our region erred in not doing as you did, 'receive brother Finney with open arms.' To tell you the truth, brother, the ministers and other christians, from this region, and from New England, who visited Oneida county last summer, saw with their own eyes, so many things which they deplored, that it was the universal opinion far and near, that irregularities were prevailing to such an alarming extent, that the *character of revivals had gone back half a century*. And this I knew to be the sentiment of our best ministers more than three months before I visited Albany. They were all deploring the introduction of these new measures into our churches, knowing that they were the same which ran out the revivals in the days of Edwards; and so they were watching and guarding against the introduction of them into their own churches, long before I came to Albany. It was the universal sentiment of ministers, while I was laboring in Jamaica last summer, that they should not dare employ a preacher in their churches who adopted these measures. This I knew to be the fact from personal conversation with scores of ministers and private christians who visited me in Jamaica. I repeat the idea for the sake of impressing it on your memory—that ministers do not complain so much of irregularities existing at the West: for probably they are not so great within your own limits, as they are in the churches into which they have been transferred abroad. And even had these evils been a thousand fold greater at the West, you would not have heard the mournful complaints of your brethren at a distance, had it been in your power to confine the whole evil within the limits of your own churches and

congregations. Your brethren know that you have the right, and are willing that you should exercise it, of pursuing your own measures, when you can take all the responsibility. But when tidings came that these new measures had been introduced into Troy, Lansingburg, and Albany, by brethren from the West, and that all the ministers and christians in those places, and all who visited those places and could not approve of these measures, were denounced as 'cold and stupid, and dead, and enemies to revivals, and leading sinners down to hell'—which things in this region were generally known to be facts long before I came to Albany; the alarm was greatly increased. And now, under these circumstances, how can you think it so strange that ministers did not receive their brethren from the West 'with open arms?' Why, brother, this was the very evil which they dreaded, and against which they had been guarding for months. For, the moment one of these brethren was received with open arms, the name of that minister who received him, was made use of all over the country, to sanction these men, and all their *calamitous measures*. It was this very thing, and nothing else, which placed brother B. in a situation where he must fall out with brother F. and his measures, or all those ministers and christians who could not be converted to these measures. There was no alternative. Brother B. could not serve two masters, and so a shameful war was commenced in our Zion, merely in consequence of the introduction of these new measures. Now place yourself in the situation of settled ministers in this region, and then say whether you would be willing to receive with open arms men, whose measures had done so much mischief in the opinion of all your brethren, and so lend the influence of your respected name to give these measures your sanction.

"Again—It was well known that there were ministers within your own limits, and those too who had the confidence of the christian public, who would not receive brother F. into

their pulpit, so long as they could avoid it without losing the confidence of their own people. And it was further known that some who did receive him, did it with trembling anxiety for the consequences. And can you think it strange, that ministers who knew, and who had talked over all these things, should not receive him with open arms?

"And besides;—It is believed by many that even now, your Presbytery would not care to employ brother F. within your own limits, long in one place. If this be a fact, there must be something wrong somewhere; either in brother F., or in the hearts of your Presbytery. For, the minister, whose preaching on the whole, exerts a healthful influence, will establish himself, not only in the affections, but in the confidence of ministers and people; and in such a manner as will render his return, and his labors on the same field, far more desirable than ever. * * * * *

"On other subjects, mankind, and even ministers, exercise far more wisdom and common sense, than on the subject of religion. Nobody ever thought of making a skillful physician, politician, or warrior, *at once*—but most of our young men, warm hearted christians, and even old ministers themselves, do take it for granted that a skillful minister can be made out of a 'novice,' *at once*. And ministers of influence must be to blame, if they do not accomplish the task.

"In estimating the talents requisite for an itinerant preacher, other considerations are no less important than intellect, or piety itself. And these qualifications cannot be known *a priori*. Nothing but actual experiment can develope the powers of a man to do good in revivals, and at the same time to secure the confidence of christians and ministers wherever he goes. I could tell you of facts to illustrate my remarks. I could tell you of some excellent young men, who could not fail to do good, where they were well known, and under the eye of settled ministers to control their movements; but who, on going into different parts of New England and elsewhere,

would do some good for a while, but ultimately, far more mischief, and would certainly have lost their own character, had they not been privately called away from that field. In this way, I think I have saved some of our own young ministers from losing all their influence, and so from leaving our own denomination. When they have fallen out with settled pastors, I never thought of disputing the point, who was to blame. Evangelists have no more right to intermeddle with ministers and their flocks, than they have with their families, wives, children, and domestic concerns; and any murmuring complaints on this point, go on the supposition, that an evangelist may lord it over all the pastors and their flocks"

CHAPTER XIII.

His Doctrinal Views and interest in the recent Theological Controversy.

Dr. Nettleton was a New England Calvinist. Although he called no man master, but took the Bible as his only rule of faith; yet the system of doctrines maintained by Edwards, Bellamy, Dwight, and other standard theological writers of New England, he believed to be the system taught in the Scriptures.

The peculiar doctrines of the Calvinistic system, such as—The Decrees of God—The Total Depravity of Man by Nature—Regeneration, by the special agency of the Holy Spirit—Particular Election to Eternal Life—Justification by Faith alone—and the Perseverance of the Saints, as they were maintained by the divines above mentioned, he not only believed, but fearlessly avowed and defended.

A few extracts from his sermons, presenting his theological views, on some of these points, may be interesting to the reader.

The following is from a sermon on the Decrees of God, founded on Ephes. i. 11.

"God never acts without design or determination. Thus to act, would be to act without wisdom. He has a perfect plan, defined exactly according to his own will, as asserted in the text. This counsel denotes his design, purpose, or decree respecting all events." * * * *

"If God has not decreed the existence of future events,

neither the existence, nor time, nor manner of such events, could possibly be foreknown. The Omniscient God views all things as eternally present. Yet, *as he existed before all things*, his knowledge of all things must have consisted in the knowledge of *all future events*. Or thus—He must have had a *present and perfect knowledge of all things*, while as yet, there was no actual existence but himself. He alone has existed from eternity; yet he is eternally Omniscient. The *actual existence of all things* must have been *future* and *known* to be future, by the self-existent and Omniscient Jehovah.

"But future events must become *certain* of existence before their existence can be *certainly known*. Though what is foreknown is equally certain of existence; yet mere knowledge cannot be the ground of this certainty. On the contrary, in the order of nature, absolute certainty is the ground of all knowledge. Now what could be the ground of the certain existence of all events, in their time, order, and perfect harmony; and what could make them eternally the objects of present, certain, intuitive knowledge in the Infinite Mind, while as yet there were none of them in actual existence? 'What but the eternal *purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will?*' If the world, or any event, could be *certainly* future, with the time and circumstances of its existence, without being made so by the decree of God, then it can actually exist without him. On this supposition, we are left without any proof of the existence of God."

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"Infinite wisdom is a complex attribute. It implies not only infinite knowledge, but infinite benevolence, and comprehends the whole moral character of God. I observe, then, that leaving out the eternal counsel or decree of God, no just conceptions can possibly be formed of his moral perfections. Infinite wisdom consists in discerning and proposing the high-

est and best possible end, and in determining to pursue the best means to accomplish it." * * * *

"If God has not *eternally determined* to accomplish all that which Omniscience sees to be best, he is neither infinitely wise nor infinitely good; unless infinite wisdom and goodness imply perfect indifference to the existence of the greatest possible good. Would we ascribe the perfection of infinite wisdom to God? It consists essentially in his fixed and immutable determination to accomplish all that which Omniscience sees to be best. An infinitely wise plan is infinitely holy, just and good. This plan, the Omniscient God views not with indifference. But in a *fixed* and *immutable determination* to accomplish this plan consists essentially the infinite wisdom, holiness, justice, and goodness of God."

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"But it will be asked, if God has decreed the actions of men, how can they be free? That man is free, and that God has decreed his actions, are plain matters of fact. Both are clearly taught in the Scriptures. That we are free in our actions we have as clear and certain evidence, as we have of our own existence. That the decrees of God are accomplished by the free and voluntary actions of men, we have the plain and direct testimony of the Bible, '*And truly the son of man goeth, as it was determined; but wo unto that man by whom he is betrayed.*'—Luke xxii. 22. '*Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and with wicked hands have crucified and slain.*'—Acts ii. 23. '*For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.*'—Acts iv. 27, 28. '*And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in the sepulchre.*' '*Without the shedding of blood there is no remission.*'

"Has God offered his Son a sacrifice for sin;—or has he not? Did Christ *lay down his life* for his sheep? and did he make his soul an offering for sin, when the Jews put him to death; or did he not? When they wounded, and bruised, and crucified him, was he wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; or was he not? If the hand and counsel of God was not in it, who will dare to say with the prophet—'*The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all?*'

The following is taken from a sermon on Ps. xcvii. 1, the object of which is to show, that it is a matter of rejoicing that God governs the universe.

"All the objections which I have ever heard against the doctrine of decrees, or election, may be reduced to this one: If God operates on the hearts of sinners, and causes them to act, how can they be free? My hearers, am I bound to obviate this objection? Does it lie against none but those who hold the doctrine of God's decrees? We will drop the doctrine of decrees. How is it then? Does God operate on the hearts of men, or does he not? If not, then we must not pray that he would do it. * * No person can pray for himself, without admitting that God may operate on his own heart, and yet he be free. '*Turn thou me, and I shall be turned*'—'*Turn us, O God of our salvation*'—'*Draw us and we will run after thee*'—'*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*' These prayers are found in the Bible. But persons ought not to have prayed in this manner, if God could not answer their prayers without destroying their free agency." * * * "No person can pray for others without admitting that God may operate on their hearts, and yet they be free. However wicked mankind may be, we cannot pray that he would stop them in their career of sin, because he cannot do it without destroying their freedom." "Christ declared, '*Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*' Sinners are then in an awful condition. *They will not come* to Christ; and God cannot make them willing, without destroy-

ing their freedom. What shall be done? It will be of no use to pray for them. * * The grand objection, therefore, which is so often urged against the doctrine of decrees, lies with equal force against the duty of prayer." * * "Let the inquiry now be made, does God govern all his creatures, and all their actions? Does he govern the actions of wicked men and devils? No, says one;—he cannot do it without destroying their freedom. No, says another; he cannot do it, without becoming the author of sin. My object is not now to prove the doctrine that God does reign over wicked men and devils; but simply to show that this is a desirable thing; and that if he can thus reign over wicked men and devils, it is indeed matter of great rejoicing." * * * "If God cannot govern wicked beings, without destroying their freedom, or becoming the author of sin, and therefore must resign his dominion over them, or let them alone, the universe is truly in an awful condition. Let us for a moment contemplate the condition we are in. Cast your eyes abroad and see how the wickedness of men prevails. The adversary of souls goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. What then shall be done? God cannot govern these beings, it is said, without becoming the author of sin. The Church of Christ is truly in a lamentable condition. What will become of the church, we know not; for *the devil has come down with great wrath.* He will do all he can to destroy the kingdom of Christ on earth. He will do all he can to destroy heaven itself. What shall be done? We live under a government which can afford us no protection. Wicked men and devils are let loose upon us. They have entered the dominions of Jehovah, and are now fast subverting his kingdom. * * * Nothing can be done. The work of desolation must go on through all eternity; for God cannot govern their actions without destroying their freedom, or becoming the author of sin. Thus, my hearers, you see the condition we are in. It is gloomy and awful beyond expression."

In a sermon from Eph. ii. 1, he traces the analogy between natural and spiritual death, and thus illustrates the doctrine of total depravity.

"In natural death, there are no remains of life. It cannot be said of a man that he is dead, as long as there is the least glimmering of life remaining.

"So of the sinner spiritually dead. There is no spiritual life, or holiness in him. If there was, it would not be true that he is dead. The apostle does not say that they were half dead, or almost dead, but he asserts that they were *dead*. If this is not entire depravity, my hearers, then those bodies in yonder graveyard, are not dead.

"Men, naturally dead, will never raise themselves to life. Never was it heard since the world began, that a body once dead, ever reanimated itself. So it is with sinners. Though as it respects blame, the cases are not parallel, yet as it respects the certainty of the event, they are exactly parallel. Left to himself, the sinner will as certainly remain in his sins, as the dead will continue to sleep in their graves.

"With respect to those naturally dead, no means can effect their resurrection to life. No skill, no attachment of surviving friends, no exertions, no tears can do it. So with sinners; no means that can be used, can raise them to spiritual life. Parents may be anxious for the souls of their children. They may labor, and weep over them; but they cannot help them. The faithful minister of the gospel may love the souls of his hearers—he may labor and exert himself in every possible way to awaken and promote the conversion of sinners, and his soul may weep in secret places for them; but he cannot awaken a single soul. Aside from divine influence, he might sound an alarm over the graves of the departed, with equal propriety, and equal success."

The following is from a sermon on the doctrine of regeneration, founded on John i: 12, 13.

"That the Holy Spirit makes use of the word, and many

instruments, to bring sinners to Christ, I have no doubt. But that men are naturally inclined to approve of, and obey the precepts of the gospel, is contradicted by the whole tenor of the scriptures. It is a fundamental principle of the gospel, that by nature we are children of wrath, and that we are at enmity with God, blinded to the light of his truth, and dead in trespasses and sins. To suppose that the Holy Spirit is communicated to all in a sufficient manner to save them, is entirely inconsistent with the idea of any special grace, and makes one man as much born of God, as another. Our text says, as many as received Christ, and believed on his name, were born of God; and the doctrine of the undistinguishing influences of the Spirit, cannot be maintained. It is a stumbling-block in the way of many, that God should give more of his Spirit to one, than to another. To remove this subject of prejudice, Pelagius, and multitudes more, have maintained, that all men receive gifts alike, and are alike furnished to the work of their salvation. This entirely dispenses with the new birth, or makes it alike common to every man. On this scheme, Judas had as much grace as Paul; and Ahab, who sold himself to work wickedness, as David, the man after God's own heart. All the difference between them was owing to the different manner in which they improved their privileges. I do not deny that the Spirit of God strives with all men who are not reprobates. I fully admit it. I admit that the promises and threatenings of the gospel, would be sufficient to persuade us to a holy life, if our understandings were not darkened, and our affections depraved. But as it is, I deny that common grace makes us *sons of God*, or that we are persuaded to be christians without a special divine influence, or that all men receive the same measure of the Spirit. After all preparatory means—all the promises and threatenings of the gospel—all the operations of common grace—and all exertions of unregenerate sinners, they must be born of God in order to become his children. There must be a *new*

creation—a work accomplished by Almighty power—a sovereign, special, supernatural work, like making a world, or raising the dead, (as to the power exerted;) and without such a work, no one can ever see the kingdom of God. *Persuasion* is not sufficient to make men new creatures. If the Holy Spirit operates on the minds of men, only by setting motives before them, be the kinds ever so diverse, or well adapted to this purpose, yet after all, it depends on the will of man, whether he shall be regenerated or not. On this scheme, the glory of regeneration belongs to ourselves. No new taste—no new spiritual discernment, springs from persuasion. If regeneration comes thus, then a man begets himself—he is born of himself—he makes himself to differ from others. On this plan, the Holy Spirit has no more to do than Paul, or Apollos. Besides—this is not what we pray for. We pray not that motives may be set before us to persuade us to regenerate ourselves; but that God would change us—create us anew. * * * * * * * *

"There is, then, only one way left, for a creature dead in trespasses and sins, to rise to life. This is by the power of God which quickens him. The same energy which brought Christ from the dead, the exceeding great power of the living God, must perform the work. Such a work being proved, the whole system of evangelical truth—the doctrines of grace—of divine sovereignty—of election—of redemption by Christ—of human depravity—and others connected with them, all flow from it. There is one grand, harmonious, and perfect system—and God is the sum, the substance, and the glory of all."

In a sermon from Acts xviii. 10, he undertakes to show that "the doctrine of election furnishes the only ground of encouragement to the use of means." This position he establishes by showing the utter inefficacy of all means, when not accompanied by the blessing of God. The following is the close of the sermon. "From this subject we may infer the

mistake of those who consider the doctrine of election a discouraging doctrine. Are there not many present, who are still without God and without hope in the world? They have spent the best of their days in sin. All means have hitherto proved ineffectual. So many years of their probation have gone, and they are still enemies of God. They have heard the gospel, and have rejected it. Permit me to summon these individuals to the bar of their own consciences.

"I would ask you, what reason have you to believe that the gospel which you have heard in vain for so many years, will take effect when your hearts are still more hard? I would that you might feel the difficulty. We have no more powerful means than those which have already been used. Now, if you deny the doctrine of election, where is your hope? We will suppose that the doctrine is not true — that God will leave you to do as you have done, and leave the means to operate as they have done. Is this encouraging? Deny the doctrine of election, and there is not a sinner in this assembly who has the least reason to conclude that he shall ever be saved.

"Perhaps some of my hearers are displeased with this doctrine, and hope that it is not true. Then let me address you on your own ground. Whether this doctrine be true or false, it is an eternal truth acknowledged by all, that '*except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*' Strike out the doctrine of election; yet the doctrine of regeneration is true. '*Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*' Strike out the doctrine of election, and let the means operate just as they have done, yet the doctrine of faith is true. '*He that believeth not shall be damned.*' Here is a given character which all the heirs of salvation must possess. Now you are at liberty to become christians on the easiest plan you can. If you will repent, and believe, and be born again, you shall be saved, whatever may become of the doctrine of election.

"But why have you not repented, and believed, and become christians already? Why do you stand disputing about this doctrine, when you know that you must repent, and believe, and be born again, or be lost? What will your disputing about this doctrine accomplish? If it be true, disputing will not alter it. Is it necessary for you to prove the doctrine to be false, before you can repent? If you will repent, the doctrine of election will not hurt you if it be true. But if it be not true, then you have got to repent, and believe, and be born again, without it; and it is high time that you were in earnest on the subject.

"If you say, you cannot repent, unless God grant you repentance;—that is the same as to say, you cannot repent unless the doctrine of election is true. For if the doctrine of election is not true, it is certain that God has not determined to grant repentance to one of the human race. If this doctrine is not true, it is certain that God has not determined to grant you repentance.

"Instead of troubling yourselves about the doctrine of election, I will show you a more excellent way. Begin to trouble yourselves about your own wicked hearts. The day of salvation is drawing to a close;—and what have you done? and where are you now? Hitherto you have rejected all the melting invitations of a bleeding Saviour; and where are you now? Hitherto you have resisted the Holy Ghost; and where are you now?

"In spite of the offers of heaven—the calls of a bleeding Saviour—the invitations, commands and threatenings of Almighty God, you have hitherto resisted; and will you continue to force your way down to hell? There is but a gleam of hope. 'Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?'

"Come, O thou Spirit of the Lord, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

A sermon from Phil. i. 6, contains a very able discussion

of the doctrine of the saints' perseverance. The following is one of his inferences.

"We see a reason why angels rejoice at the repentance of *one sinner*. If angels did not believe this doctrine, they could have no ground on which to rejoice. They must wait till the sinner gets to heaven.

"The true penitent will certainly arrive safe at the mansions of the blessed. A firm belief of this doctrine, lays the only foundation for joy in heaven over his repentance. If angels did not firmly believe this doctrine, their joy would be unfounded. Their language would be, that sinner has truly repented. He is now a child of God—an heir of heaven. But whether he will ever reach this happy place—whether he will ever sing with us in glory, is a matter of great uncertainty. He may yet become a child of the devil, and an heir of hell. Could we *know* that he would certainly arrive safe at heaven, we might now tune our harps, and sing *glory to God in the highest*. But since we have already been disappointed, and devils and damned spirits are now triumphing over some at whose repentance we once rejoiced, it is best to wait and see how they hold out. Hear them triumph in the regions of despair. 'Ye angels,' say they, 'Ye may suspend your songs, and hang up your harps. Let your joy be turned into mourning. Victory is ours.'

"What think ye, my hearers? Has there been joy in heaven over some who are now in hell? If they so rejoiced at the news of the sinner's repentance, what messenger shall carry back the mournful tidings that he is lost?"

Another inference is,

"That there may be such a thing as the full assurance of hope in this life. If the doctrine is not true, the best christian on earth must be altogether uncertain of heaven. But it being true, we learn on what the full assurance of hope is founded. So far as the christian can be certain that the good work has

been begun in his soul, so far he can be certain of arriving at heaven.

"It is surprising that some who deny this doctrine, will yet say that they are certain of heaven. This is plainly absurd. If one christian may fall away and finally perish, then another, and another may; and so all may be lost. Not one can have assurance of salvation.

"I remember a short conversation on this subject, of the following import.

"A person who denied this doctrine, was expressing his joy in believing. He was interrogated on this subject. 'Why do you rejoice, my friend? Do you think there is any certain connection between your believing now, and your final salvation?' He perceived that if he answered in the affirmative, he must admit the doctrine, and so he replied in the negative. The question was then put to him, 'if there is no certain connection between your present belief, and your final salvation, why do you rejoice?' He replied, 'because my sins are forgiven.' 'But why rejoice because your sins are forgiven? You say, you have no evidence that you are not to suffer in hell for your sins after all. Why rejoice because your sins are forgiven?' 'Why, if I am faithful, if I persevere to the end, I shall be saved.' 'Very true—unless you persevere, you cannot be saved. But what reason have you to conclude that you shall persevere? What makes you so confident that you shall be saved? Show us the ground of your confidence. Do you trust in your own resolutions?' 'No.' 'Well, what then? Do you trust in the stability of your own will? Do you feel superior to the power of temptation? Do you think you are a person of such decision, such stability and firmness, that when you undertake the work, you shall certainly go through with it? Is this the reason you have to think that you shall persevere and be saved?' 'No.' 'Well, what then? What reason have you to think you should be faithful—that you shall persevere and be saved? If God is not first faithful

to you, you will not be faithful to him.' And, my hearers, he could see no reason why he should rejoice. He could find no rest for the sole of his foot, until he was driven back on the ground of our text. *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.* And, my hearers, what evidence have you that you shall persevere? Do you trust in yourselves? You lean on a broken reed. You build on the sand. There is depravity enough in your hearts to sink you to hell, if left to yourselves. If you have never seen and felt this awful truth, you have never yet seen your own hearts, nor been thoroughly awakened. If you have not felt this awful truth, you have not yet been driven out of yourselves—not yet left the strong hold of self-righteous deception—not yet *fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before you.*"

Although Dr. Nettleton dwelt much, in his preaching, on the doctrines of grace, and exhibited with great plainness the lost condition of the sinner, and his entire dependence on the sovereign mercy of God; yet no man ever held up more fully and more clearly the obligations of men; or pressed more forcibly on the consciences of sinners the duty of immediate repentance. It was a prominent object with him to show that sinners labor under no inability to obey the divine commands which furnishes them with the least excuse. Hence he felt no embarrassment in urging upon them by every solemn and affecting consideration, an immediate compliance with the terms of the gospel.

The following is from a sermon on 2 Cor. vi. 20. "Do you ask what God requires of you? The answer is plain. '*Be ye reconciled to God.*' This is what God claims. And from this we cannot depart, without entering on forbidden ground. He claims the heart. And from this we cannot depart without disloyalty to God. Individuals may negotiate a treaty of peace, though the heart be not engaged. An outward reconciliation may be effected, while the heart remains

the same. But not so with God. He looketh on the heart. If that be withheld, *to what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord?* If the heart be not engaged, however sinners may treat about a reconciliation, their insolence is met with the repulsive demand—*who hath required this at your hand?* Without this not a step can be taken towards settling your peace with God.

"And now all things are ready; and God is inviting and beseeching you to accept his message. What is the reply of your heart? Do you not like the terms of this treaty? You are required only to be *reconciled to God.* What can be more reasonable than this? Is it hard that you should be required to love God? to feel sorrow for sin? to confess and forsake it? Is this hard? Or is sin so lovely and so desirable that it appears hard and unreasonable that you should be required to hate and oppose it with all your heart? Why then, will you not renounce it? Is sin so noble a thing in itself, and so desirable in its consequences, that you cannot part with it—that you will lay down your life—your eternal life—for its sake? Your love of sin is all the excuse you have, or can have. Or will you plead your *inability?* What? cannot be reconciled to God! Cannot feel sorrow for sin? Cannot cease to rebel against the King of heaven! What an acknowledgment is this! Out of thine own mouth, wilt thou be condemned. If indeed, you are so opposed to God, that you cannot feel sorrow for sin, this is the very reason why you ought to be condemned. The harder it is for you to repent and love God, the more wicked you are, and the greater will be your condemnation.

"God himself is beseeching you to be reconciled. And why do you not obey? Has your pride and stubbornness arisen to such a pitch that you will not do the most reasonable things, though God beseech you?" * * *

"In his name I plead. You may now disregard the voice of a dying fellow mortal. Let him be forgotten. But will

you not hear the voice of God? *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken!* His commanding voice to every sinner present, is, '*Be ye reconciled to God.*' Have you not continued long enough in your rebellion? Have you not long enough resisted his call? And will you now again turn away from him that speaketh from heaven? Will you not hearken to the voice of the heavenly charmer—your bleeding Saviour? Have you no repentance—not a tear to shed for the sins which nailed him to the cross.

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"Sinners, must I leave you where I found you, *unreconciled to God?* Your business is not with a fellow mortal. I have done; and the whole remains to be settled between God and your own souls. However hard you may think this message, it is not mine. God beseeches—God commands your compliance *now.* And will you raise your feeble arm to oppose? God is on the throne; and have you an arm like God? However opposed you may be, yet God is on the throne, and what can you do? God is on the throne, and will dash his enemies in pieces like a potter's vessel.

"Before I close, I must remind you that with some of you, this may be the last call—the last offer of peace which God will ever send you. But a different message will soon arrive. You will shortly hear again from your offended Sovereign. Before the setting of the sun, the messenger of death may be despatched with a commission to drag some guilty soul to his dread tribunal. He may now be even at the door.

"By the mercies of God, and by the terrors of his wrath—by the joys of heaven, and by the pains of hell—by the merits of a Saviour's blood, and by the worth of your immortal souls, I beseech you, lay down the arms of your rebellion; bow, and submit to your rightful Sovereign. Oppose, and still he will reign. *For God hath set his king upon his holy hill of Zion,* and hath sworn by himself that unto him every knee shall bow.

"Once he has descended with a message of peace and good will to men. But shortly he will be '*revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*'"

In addition to the foregoing, some extracts of letters to his friends, illustrating his doctrinal views, will now be introduced.

The following is from a letter addressed to the Rev. Dr. Woods, of Andover, dated May 6, 1829.

"You have doubtless read Erskine on the 'Unconditional freeness of the gospel.' The writer doubtless wishes to promote the cause of religion. But the tendency of the work, I do think, is directly to defeat that object.

"In the early part of my ministry, the sentiments of Hervey and Marshall I found, in many places, meeting and checking the progress of conviction in some sinners, and giving false peace to others. I have found some studying Marshall's 'Gospel Mystery of Sanctification,' and trying to believe it; but conscience, awakened by the Spirit of God, would not suffer them to rest in a belief that their sins were pardoned while they had no evidence of a change of heart. I was invited to a house to converse with an interesting young lady who had been long anxious for her soul. Many efforts had been made to give her consolation; but in vain. 'What do you think of this book?' said she. 'It is Marshall on Sanctification, and was recommended to me by ——, and if I dared believe it I should think I was a christian.' 'I am glad you dare not believe it. There is some part of it, at least, which you ought not to believe,' was my answer. I perceived that her conscience was more orthodox than the author. She gave it up. Her convictions increased and soon

terminated in hopeful conversion. The faith which Marshall required, did not commend itself to her conscience. Believing that her sins were pardoned, against the dictates of conscience and the Bible, seemed to her like believing a lie, to make it true. How to reconcile this, I suppose Marshall found to be a 'mystery.' Hence the title of his book. Hence, too, the more the conscience is awakened to perform its office, the more difficult divines of this description find it to deal with sinners. The great object, they think, is to give sinners peace. And all their efforts are directed to this single object. When the sinner begins to see his character and condition in some measure as it really is:—when the word of God begins to take effect, and conscience to perform its office, every effort is made to counteract the very means which the Spirit of God employs to bring the sinner to a reconciliation. Erskine agrees substantially with Marshall in his views of faith. It consists in believing that our sins are pardoned. He has built his system upon Hervey and Marshall, with this wonderful improvement, that we are not required to believe a lie to make it true; for *the sins of all mankind are pardoned, whether they believe it or not.* Pardon is *universal and unconditional. The atonement is itself the pardon, and is unaffected by man's belief or unbelief.* While in all their rebellion and infidelity, *it is lavished upon the mass of the guilty without discrimination. The use of faith is not to remove the penalty, or to make the pardon better; for the penalty is removed, and the pardon is proclaimed, whether we believe it or not; but to give the pardon a moral influence, by which it may heal the spirituul disease of the soul. Mankind are sanctified by their belief of the pardon.*

"I cannot but notice how one error grows out of another. The definition of Atonement is 'THE ACTUAL REMOVAL OF SIN.' If so, then it must include pardon *irrespective of character*, antecedent to faith, or repentance, or conversion, and of course, limited to the elect. And faith consists in believing

that our sins are pardoned, and that we are of the elect. But to avoid this difficulty, limited atonement becomes unlimited; and so the atonement is made for all mankind. Therefore, *pardon is lavished upon all mankind.* This is the most plausible scheme of universalism that I have ever seen. If mankind can only be made to believe that their sins are pardoned, this will make them *love God—restore the key-stone of the arch—sanctify them—give peace of conscience and justify them.* Now all this being taken for granted, without one text to prove it, and with the whole Bible against him, ('He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him,' &c.) he adopts every method in his power, to make all his readers believe that their sins are pardoned. To doubt this, must be a great crime. Unbelief is the greatest sin, and the more conscience awakes to perform its office of conviction, the more guilty and criminal is the sinner for listening to its admonitions. When the Spirit of God is convincing of sin, and the commandment comes and sin revives; and when the sinner sees and feels that he is lost and needs pardon—he tries to take it off by convincing him that it is all false alarm. If he does not believe that his sins are pardoned before he has one thought of repentance, or of asking it, the poor man makes God a liar. 'He that believeth not,' *i. e.* that his sins are pardoned, 'hath made him a liar.'

"The evil produced by such a book, from the pen of one who has already acquired a reputation as a writer, and a christian, cannot be calculated in this world. Here are false views of faith, of the atonement, of pardon, and of justification, which he makes to consist in a sense of pardon. There is no such thing as evidence of a change of heart. But believing that our sins are pardoned, will produce that change—make us love God, and thus give *peace* and *confidence*, and *restore the key-stone of the arch.*

"I cannot but express my full conviction that the sentiments contained in that book, are more directly calculated to

prevent conviction of sin, and to put a stop to genuine revivals of religion, than any thing which has ever been published."

The following is also from a letter addressed to Dr. Woods, and dated June 18th, 1834. Speaking of a certain class of divines, he says: "They admit that there is a tendency, or propensity to sin, in the very constitution of the human mind;" but they deny that this tendency is sinful. They also admit that "every effect must have a cause, and that this cause must be prior to the effect."

"Now I observe that the objections which they alledge against the views of their opponents, lie equally against their own. It will be no easier for the sinner to repent and believe against this propensity to sin, than it was while it was called a 'sinful propensity.' Changing the name of a lion into that of a lamb, will not alter its nature. This propensity to sin, they admit, does all the mischief; and will it do any the less, in consequence of being called an 'innocent or harmless propensity.' Or will the sinner be any more likely to be on his guard, and to watch and fight against it? Directly the reverse. But why object to calling an 'infallible tendency or propensity to sin, a sinful propensity.' 'Then,' say they, 'regeneration must consist in removing it.' But suppose you give it any other name, e. g. *evil, bad, vile, vicious, pernicious, or dangerous*, then, also, regeneration must consist in removing it. Go one step farther, and call it *calamitous*, we should still think that regeneration consisted in removing this *calamitous* propensity to sin. Venture one step further, and allay the fears of sinners entirely. Call it an innocent propensity, and then it need not be removed by regeneration. And yet one would be at a loss to see how their scheme can be made consistent with itself. One would think that an infallible tendency to sin would need to be removed in regeneration, or that regeneration could never take place. If 'every effect must have a cause, and this cause must be prior to the effect,'

then no sinner ever did, or ever will put forth a holy choice until this infallible tendency to sin be removed, and succeeded by an infallible tendency to holiness; unless an infallible tendency to sin can be the cause of a holy choice. This latter opinion they seem to have adopted. They discard the principle that 'like produces like,' and assume another, viz. that a 'fountain can,' and actually doth, 'send forth at the same place, sweet water and bitter.' 'Men *do* gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles.' We have heard the new philosophy, that all trees are by nature alike, neither good nor bad, until they bear fruit. And then, the fruit is not good, but the tree is good only *because* the fruit is good, and vice versa. 'Make the tree good and the fruit will be good,' said our Saviour, 'for the tree is known by the fruit.' Make the fruit good, and the fruit will be good, says the new philosophy; for the fruit is known by the fruit. Nothing is good or bad but fruit. There can be nothing in the tree *itself* back of the fruit but what is common to all trees—'pura naturalia.'

"But how do they dispose of this 'propensity to sin, in pressing the obligations of sinners?

1. "They give this propensity a soft name—deny its sinfulness altogether, and do not even call it bad, or dangerous.

2. "They put into the mouth of the sinner an excuse for retaining his propensity to sin in all its strength.

3. "They call upon him to exercise no other *repentance or faith* than that which is consistent with the existence of this infallible tendency or propensity to sin in all its strength.

4. "They adopt, for his accommodation, a new theory of regeneration. 'It has been said by some, that regeneration consists in removing this sinful bias which is anterior to actual volition.' This they deny. But whether we call this propensity *sinful*, or not, all orthodox divines, who have admitted its existence, have, I believe, united in the opinion that regeneration does consist in removing it. This, certainly, was the opinion of Edwards; and it constituted the principal differ-

ence between him and Dr. John Taylor. It was, also, the very quintessence of his treatise on Religious Affections. Until this tendency to sin be removed, it is absolutely certain that true repentance never can begin. It is turning from the love, to the loathing of sin. 'The heart,' says Edwards, 'can have no tendency to make itself better, until it first *has a better tendency*.' No sinner ever did, or ever will make a holy choice prior to an inclination, bias, or tendency to holiness. On the whole, their views of depravity, of regeneration, and of the mode of preaching to sinners, I think cannot fail of doing very great mischief. This exhibition overlooks the most alarming features of human depravity, and the very essence of experimental religion. It is directly calculated to prevent sinners from coming under conviction of sin, and to make them think well of themselves while in an unregenerate state. It flatters others with the delusion that they may give, or have given, their hearts to God, while their propensity to sin remains in all its strength. Entertaining this delusion, they cannot be converted. Every sinner under deep conviction of sin, knows this statement to be false, so far as his own experience is concerned. The progress of conviction is ordinarily as follows:—Trouble and alarm. 1. On account of *outward* sins. 2. On account of sinful thoughts. 3. On account of hardness of heart, deadness and insensibility to divine things; tendency, bias, proneness, or propensity to sin, both inferred and felt. And this the convicted sinner always regards not merely as calamitous, but as awfully criminal in the sight of God. And the sinner utterly despairs of salvation without a change in this propensity to sin. And while he feels this propensity to be thus criminal, he is fully aware that if God by a sovereign act of his grace, does not interpose to remove or change it, he shall never give his heart to God, nor make one holy choice. If the sinner has not felt this, he has not yet been under conviction of sin, or felt his need of regeneration.

"Those who adopt the views I am considering, exhort the sinner to do that only which leaves his propensity to sin in all its strength. Hence conversions are made as easy as you can turn your hand. It is only to resolve and the work is done. They do in effect tell their hearers, and their readers, what the most godly christians certainly find it the most difficult to believe, that their propensity to sin, however strong it may be, is not criminal, but only calamitous—that they need not be alarmed at this awful propensity to sin—that they need not, for God does not, regard it with displeasure—that they can neither change it themselves, nor are required to do it—and that they need not ask or even expect God to do it for them. Such a sentiment, however abhorrent to the ear and to the heart of piety, is, nevertheless, perfectly congenial with the feelings of all the most hardened in sin; and unless their consciences are more orthodox than such preaching, they will never be converted. Every step in the progress of conviction and conversion is in direct opposition to these sentiments. I know that converts may be made by hundreds and by thousands on these principles, with perfect ease; for so it has been in former times among the *Christ-ians* and others in New England, as I have had full opportunity to know. *But piety never did, and never will descend far in the line of such sentiments.* Were I to preach in this manner, I do solemnly believe that I should be the means of healing the heart of awakened sinners slightly, of crying peace, peace, when there is no peace, and of throwing the whole weight of my ministerial influence on the side of human rebellion against God."

The following extracts are taken from letters written at different times, and to different individuals.

Speaking of the character of infants, he says, "For one I do solemnly believe that God views and treats them in all respects, just as he would do if they were sinners. To say that animals die, and therefore that death can be no proof of

sin in infants, is to take infidel ground. The infidel has just as good a right to say, because animals die without being sinners, therefore adults may. If death may reign to such an alarming extent over the human race, and be no proof of sin; then it may reign to any extent in the universe and be no proof of sin. Consequently what Paul says, 'Death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,' cannot be true."

In another letter, speaking of the consequences of denying the depravity of infants, he says, "It is to deny that they need redemption by Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, or if they do need redemption, it must be redemption from something which is not sin in any sense; and if they need regeneration, it must be a change of something which is not sinful in any sense. If the soul be innocent, it can be redeemed from nothing, and can never join the song of the redeemed, 'unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.' If the soul be innocent, it can be regenerated only for the worse."

Speaking of the theory which accounts for the fact that sinners do not love God, by supposing that his character is not clearly seen—that divine things are too remote and unreal to call forth the affections of their hearts, he says, "when brought near and real, they will draw forth the opposition of the heart. You may destroy the sinner's earthly plans, break up all his interest in the concerns of time—fill his mind with all the solemn realities of death, judgment and eternity—bring him under the most powerful convictions of sin; and the selfish principle may be more active this very moment than ever, in building up a righteousness, or in quarreling with God about the terms of salvation. It is sometimes taken for granted that if the sinner had clear views of the character of God, he would love him. But facts prove the contrary. Sinners in the last stages of conviction, who have lost all interest in the concerns of time—sinners too on a dying bed, who care

nothing for the world, feel more opposition than ever. At this very crisis, when time with all its concerns has dwindled into nothing, the sinner for the first time, discovers the appalling truth, that the *carnal* mind is enmity against God. The selfish principle, the carnal mind, with all its enmity against God, remains in full strength, until slain, or taken away by the act of the Holy Spirit. 'Even when we were dead, hath quickened us together with Christ.'"

In another letter, speaking of the theory that "God prefers, all things considered, holiness to sin in all instances in which the latter takes place," he says, "If this be so, the question arises, why does not God place holiness in the lieu of sin in a given case? The answer is, 'God cannot sustain the greatest amount of holiness in the universe, without that influence which results from the existence of sin and its punishment.' He needs therefore the influence which will result from the punishment of this sin. This is God's reason for not placing holiness in the lieu of this sin, though he desires it, in itself considered, and all things considered. He cannot do it without putting it out of his power to sustain the greatest amount of holiness. And yet he *sincerely* desires that the sinner would do it without divine influence. Now suppose the sinner should do it. According to this theory, he would put it out of God's power to sustain the greatest amount of holiness. Consequently, if the theory be true, God *sincerely desires that sinners would put it out of his power to sustain the greatest amount of holiness.*

"It is supposed that if this theory is not true, sin must be excellent in itself. Is there no other alternative? If God brings *light out of darkness, order out of confusion, and good out of evil,* are darkness, confusion and evil, good in themselves? May they not, by contrast, show light, order and good, to better advantage? So '*our unrighteousness may commend the righteousness of God.*'"

The foregoing extracts, which might be greatly extended,

will serve to give the reader some idea of Dr. Nettleton's theological views.

It is well known that within the last quarter of a century, there has been considerable controversy in New England respecting the best mode of stating and defending the doctrines of Calvinism. On the one hand, it has been maintained that these doctrines, in the sense in which they have been commonly received, are inconsistent with sound philosophy, and that they ought to give place to more rational views. On the other hand, it has been maintained, that the explanations proposed, in some instances at least, amount to a virtual denial of the doctrines themselves, and to the adoption of dangerous errors.

The points of controversy relate principally to the decrees and government of God—the moral agency of man—the nature of holiness—and the doctrines of native depravity, regeneration and election.

The reader, who wishes to make himself acquainted with the manner in which these points have been discussed, is referred to the periodicals and pamphlets which contain the discussion, and which have been extensively circulated in the christian community.

In this controversy Dr. Nettleton took no public part. But he did not regard it with indifference. On the contrary he watched its progress with the deepest interest, and with an eye fixed on its bearings upon christian experience, and revivals of religion. .

It is evident from the foregoing extracts from his sermons and letters, that his views of the Calvinistic doctrines were such as were maintained by the orthodox ministers of New England, at the beginning of the present century. The new views, therefore, which were put forth as improvements, he did not receive. They did not appear to him to be improvements. On the contrary, he believed them to be erroneous, and of dangerous tendency. From the first promulgation of

them, he was grieved and alarmed; and his sorrow was rendered the more intense by the fact, that some of the advocates of these views, were brethren with whom he had labored in revivals, and been on terms of the most endearing intimacy. The pain of Whitefield was not greater, when his friend and brother, John Wesley, avowed his hostility to Calvinism, than was that of Dr. Nettleton when these brethren whom he tenderly loved, began to maintain and propagate opinions which seemed to him to be unscriptural, and to be adapted to injure the cause of revivals.

His strength had been spent in revivals; and it had been his constant aim to elevate their character by sedulously guarding against every thing which was suited to mar their purity, or weaken their power over the consciences of men. And it was his settled conviction, that the purity of revivals depends greatly on the faithfulness with which the doctrines of the cross are preached. He had observed that when the standard of orthodoxy is lowered, the danger of delusion is increased, and the character of revivals is injured. He was "well aware that popular excitements, without doctrinal instruction," (or with false doctrinal instruction,) "may be called revivals; and that zeal without knowledge may glory in the multiplication of its converts. But such excitements are no blessing to the church."

It was the full conviction of Dr. Nettleton that all genuine religious experience is based on correct views of the doctrines of grace, and consequently, that the religious experience of those whose views of these doctrines are defective, or essentially erroneous, will be in like degree defective or spurious. He felt, as we have seen, the great importance of exhibiting clearly the doctrines of the cross in revivals of religion; and hence he regarded those theological speculations which seemed to him to obscure, or utterly to subvert these doctrines, as directly tending to corrupt revivals, and in this way, to destroy the souls of men. The opinions above referred to,

seemed to him to have, some of them in a greater, and some in a less degree, this dangerous tendency.

Whether his apprehensions were well founded, is a question which will be differently decided by different individuals, according to the views which they entertain of the controverted points. The controversy is to be settled by an appeal, not to the opinions of fallible men, but to the decisions of the word of God. The views of Dr. Nettleton are introduced, not for the purpose of proving that those with whom he sympathized in this controversy were right; but simply for the purpose of giving a correct history of his life. That he felt deeply in relation to this controversy, and that he considered some of the views which were maintained and defended, to be errors, dangerous to the souls of men, is well known by all who had any intercourse with him. Such being his convictions, he could not hold his peace. It was, indeed, painful to him to disagree with his brethren; but he felt himself laid under solemn obligations to maintain what he believed to be the truth, and to bear testimony against what seemed to him to be dangerous error, whatever sacrifice it might cost him. Accordingly he said to one of his brethren, "such is my conviction of the tendency of these views to corrupt revivals, and produce spurious conversions, that if all New England should go over, I should prefer to stand alone."

But while he was thus decided in the maintenance of his own religious opinions, he entertained the kindest feelings towards those of his brethren from whom he felt compelled to differ. He was, as has been already remarked, grieved that their influence should be exerted to promote, what he considered the cause of error; and he felt it to be his duty to expostulate with them. With some of them he maintained repeated and long discussions. But he never engaged in bitter and angry controversy. He always treated his brethren with kindness. He never impeached their motives, nor depreciated their talents, nor aspersed their characters by

loading them with reproachful epithets. And his brethren, I trust, never doubted the sincerity of his heart, however much they may have been grieved by the alarm which he felt, and expressed, at their supposed errors.

One of these brethren made him a visit, at a period during his last sickness, when in his own view, and that of his friends, he was near the close of life. The interview was tender and affectionate. It revived the recollection of many past scenes of thrilling interest. Nothing was said in regard to theological differences. Two days after this interview, Dr. Nettleton wrote to this brother the following letter.

" My Dear Brother:

" I thank you for your visit, and the sympathy which you manifested in my affliction. The sight of your face revived many tender recollections. There were many things which I wished to say to you, but my strength would not permit. How long I am to linger on these mortal shores, I know not. But as you are aware, I consider myself near to the eternal world; and I wish to say, that my views of the great doctrines which I preached twenty-five years ago, have not altered. They appear to me more precious than ever. I wish also to say, that I have the same views of some of your published writings, which I have often expressed to you in years past. I need not tell you that I love you. You know that I have ever loved you. You know also that I have been grieved and distressed that you should have adopted and publicly maintained sentiments which I cannot but regard as eminently dangerous to the souls of men. I impeach not your motives. I judge not your heart. I would cherish the hope that your own religious experience is at variance with some things which you have published; particularly on the subject of self-love, and the great doctrine of regeneration. It does seem to me, I experienced all which you make essential to regeneration, while, as I now fully believe, my heart was unrecon-

ciled to God. And this is the reason which leads me to fear that what you have written, will be the means of deceiving and destroying souls. I say this with the kindest feelings, and with eternity in view. Receive it as my dying testimony, and as an expression of my sincere love. Farewell, my brother. We shall soon meet at the judgment seat of Christ. God grant that we may meet in heaven.

"Your affectionate friend and brother,

"ASAHEL NETTLETON."

East-Windsor, Jan. 19, 1843.

This letter is inserted here, not to prove that Dr. Nettleton was right in his theological views, and his brethren wrong; but to correct two false impressions which have been made, to some extent, on the public mind. One is, that Dr. Nettleton felt a bitter hostility towards those brethren from whom he differed. The other is, that in the near prospect of death, his views underwent an important change in respect to the tendency of those speculations which had caused him so much solicitude. Neither of these impressions is correct, as this letter fully evinces. He never entertained unkind feelings towards his brethren; and his views of christian doctrine remained unaltered to the last. The great truths which he maintained through life, were his stay and solace amid the pangs of dissolving nature, and in the near prospect of an eternal retribution. He doubtless now knows what is truth on those points, respecting which he and his brethren differed. They also will soon know. They and he will soon meet at the judgment seat of Christ; and let every reader unite in the prayer that they may meet in heaven.

CHAPTER XIV.

His last Sickness and Death.

The sickness of Dr. Nettleton in 1822, gave a shock to his constitution from which it never recovered. For a considerable part of the time during the remainder of his life, he was exceedingly feeble; and at no time was he able to engage in arduous labor. Still he was not entirely laid aside. He preached, as we have seen, in many places, and in some with great success. Finding the climate of New England too severe for his enfeebled constitution during the winter months, he usually, for a number of years, spent them at the South; and by great care in avoiding excitement and excessive fatigue, he was able to enjoy a comfortable degree of health, for most of the time, until the summer of 1841, when he began to be afflicted with urinary calculi, which soon confined him to the house, and subjected him to great bodily suffering. Finding no relief from medical prescriptions, and being reduced to that state in which it was evident he could live but a short time, on the 14th of February, 1843, he submitted to the operation of lithotomy, by which he obtained partial relief, and hopes were entertained, for a season, of his entire recovery. But after a few months, it became manifest, that the disease was returning upon him. His sufferings again became exceedingly great, till on the 8th of December, 1843, he submitted to a second operation. For some time, he appeared to be doing well, and hopes were again entertained of his recov-

ery. But these hopes were not realized. He continued in a feeble state until the 16th of May, 1844, when the powers of nature failed, and he resigned his spirit into the hand of God who gave it.

During his protracted and severe sufferings, his piety was subjected to a new test. We have seen its efficacy in prompting him, while in health, to the most arduous and unremitted labors in the cause of Christ; and it was no less efficacious in sustaining him in the day of trial. For many months together, his bodily pain was almost without intermission, and exceedingly great—at times, indeed, excruciating. But he was strengthened to endure it with patience and resignation. During the whole of his sickness, he was never heard to utter a murmuring word. He was often heard to say, "My sufferings are great, but they are nothing in comparison with what I deserve." A large part of the time during his sickness, his mind was vigorous and active. He read many books during this period, particularly D'Aubigne's History of the Reformation, with which he was much delighted, Gaussen on Inspiration, Tracy's History of the Great Awakening, the entire works of the younger Edwards, much of the works of Emmons, a large part of the works of Andrew Fuller, besides many smaller works. What he read, he read with great attention, and he would often make criticisms and comments on the things which he had read. But the Bible was the man of his counsel. He would often say, "there are many good books, but after all, there is nothing like the Bible." And it never was so precious to him as at this period. Although he had made it his study for more than forty years, and had acquired a knowledge of it to which few attain, yet he found it an inexhaustible fund of rich instruction. He could adopt the language of the Psalmist, "*How sweet are thy words unto my taste; yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage forever; for they are the*

rejoicing of my heart. Thy Statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." * * * * *

He not only read some portion of the scriptures every day, but he devoted much time, to a close and critical study of them. He usually kept his Greek Testament, and his Greek Concordance by him, and diligently compared different parts of scripture with each other in the original language, that he might be sure to get the precise meaning. I found him one morning with the Greek Testament in his hand. He said, "you will perhaps wonder that I should be reading this. You may suppose that a person in my situation, would prefer to read the translation. But I seem to get nearer to the fountain when I read the original. It is like drinking water at the spring, rather than from a vessel in which it has been carried away. By reading the Greek, I get shades of meaning, which cannot be expressed in any translation." It was common for him to entertain his friends with comments and remarks on portions of scripture; and these comments were exceedingly interesting and instructive. Many an individual has gone away from his bed side, with a more lively sense of the worth of the Bible, than he ever felt before.

He was not in the habit, during his sickness, of speaking very often of his own religious feelings; but it was manifest from the whole strain of his conversation, and particularly from the lively interest which he took in the truths of the Bible, that he generally enjoyed great peace of mind.

On one occasion, having expressed to me his apprehension that his disease was incurable, I inquired of him the state of his mind. He expressed entire submission to the will of God—a willingness to be in his hands, and to be disposed of according to his pleasure. He spoke of the great deceitfulness of the human heart, and the danger of self-deception; but intimated that he had no distressing doubts and fears. He manifested an ardent attachment to the doctrines which he had preached, and seemed to derive from them great support

in the near prospect of eternity; and he expressed a peculiar love for those of his brethren, who had been decided in their adherence to the truth, and in their opposition to prevailing errors.

On another occasion, he conversed very freely concerning his own spiritual state. He gave me a more particular account of his conversion than he had ever done before.* It brought to his recollection so many tender scenes, that he was greatly affected and wept abundantly. He spake of the doctrines of grace, and said with great emotion, "I do not need any body to tell me that they are true. I am fully convinced of their truth, by my own experience."

One morning, as I entered the room, he said to me, that these words had been running in his mind:

"Death will invade us by the means appointed,
Nor am I anxious, if I am prepared,
What shape he comes in.

In the course of the conversation, he said, "more of my life is written in Bunyan's Grace abounding to the chief of sinners, than any where else." He was a great admirer of the writings of Bunyan, and often referred to them in illustration of his own opinions.

On being asked whether he still entertained the same views of the errors, on account of which he had manifested so much solicitude—he spake with great emotion, saying, "It is the bearing which these errors have upon the eternal interests of men, which gives them all their importance in my estimation. It is in view of death, judgment, and eternity, that I have looked at them. If I had not regarded them as dangerous to the souls of men, I should have felt no solicitude respecting them."

At another time, he wished me to read to him the following hymn, in Wardlaw's collection.

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* The same that is inserted in Chapter I

'1. Come let us join our friends above
That have obtained the prize,
And on the eagle wings of love,
To joy celestial rise.

2. Let saints below in concert sing,
With those to glory gone;
For all the servants of our king,
In heaven and earth are one.

3. One family, we dwell in him,
One church, above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death.

4. One army of the living God,
To his command we bow,
Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now.

5. Each moment, to their endless home,
Some parting spirits fly;
And we are to the margin come,
And soon expect to die.

6. Dear Saviour, be our constant guide,
Then, when the word is given,
Bid death's cold stream and flood divide,
And land us safe in heaven."

He alluded to this hymn, several times, with great interest, during his sickness.

On one occasion he spoke with great feeling of those who were hopefully converted in the revivals under his preaching, and said, the thought of meeting them in the future world, was often exceedingly interesting. "But," said he, "I have never allowed myself to be very confident of arriving at heaven, lest the disappointment should be the greater. I know that the heart is exceedingly deceitful, and that many will be deceived. And why am not I as liable to be deceived as others?" He spoke of the opinion maintained by some, that none are ever actuated by any other principle than self-love, and said, "I

should have no hope of being saved, if I believed myself never to have been actuated by a higher principle,"

He one day referred to the words of the apostle, "Despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." He observed that there are two ways in which divine chastisements are improperly received. One is, *despising* them, that is, making light of them—disregarding them, as a stubborn, disobedient child sometimes sets at defiance and treats with contempt the chastisement of his father. The other is, *fainting* under them, that is, making too much of them, feeling as though they were too heavy to be borne, and greater than we deserve. "We ought," said he, "to feel that all our sufferings, however great, are *light afflictions*, infinitely less than we deserve."

When asked at one time, if he did not sometimes get weary of life, he said, "It is wearisome. But I have sometimes heard persons express a desire to die, when it was painful to me. I desire to have no will on the subject." He felt that it was as much our duty to be willing to live and suffer, if such be the will of God, as to be willing to die. Asking for the hymn-book, he read the following stanza:

"Be this my one great business here,
With holy trembling, holy fear,
To make my calling sure;
Thine utmost counsel to fulfill,
And *suffer* all thy righteous will,
And to the end endure."

It was very common for him, when inquired of respecting the state of his mind, instead of giving a direct answer, to point to some hymn, or some passage of scripture as indicative of his feelings.

On one occasion, finding him in very great pain, I said to him, "I hope the Lord will give you patience." He replied, "I have need of patience." I remarked that when suffering severe pain, it was profitable to think of the sufferings of

Christ. He said that the words of the 228th Village Hymn had been running in his mind all night.

1. "Begone unbelief!
My Saviour is near,
And for my relief
Will surely appear.
By prayer let me wrestle,
And he will perform,
With Christ in the vessel,
I smile at the storm.

2. Determined to save,
He watched o'er my path,
When, Satan's blind slave,
I sported with death:
And can he have taught me
To trust in his name,
And thus far have brought me,
To put me to shame?

3. Why should I complain
Of want or distress,
Temptation or pain?
He told me no less;
The heirs of salvation
I know from his word,
Through much tribulation,
Must follow their Lord.

4. Though dark be my way,
Since he is my guide,
'T is mine to obey,
'T is his to provide;
His way was much rougher,
And darker than mine;
Did Jesus thus suffer,
And shall I repine?

5. His love in time past,
Forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last
In trouble to sink:
Though painful at present,
'T will cease before long,
And then, O how pleasant
The conqueror's song."

Being one day in very great pain, he said to me, "I ought not to complain; but all that I have ever suffered in the course of my life, is nothing in comparison with this. But it is nothing in comparison with what I deserve." "No," said I, "nor is it worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." He requested me to take from the shelf and hand to him the Remains of Carlos Wilcox; and with great interest he read the following lines:

"But wherefore will not God
E'en now, from ills on others brought, exempt
The offspring of regenerating grace,
The children of his love? Imperfect yet,
They need the chastenings of eternal care,
To save them from the wily blandishments
Of error, and to win their hearts away
From the polluting, ruining joys of earth!"

Speaking at one time of his disease, as that which for many years he had dreaded more than any other, he pointed me to the following passage in the Life of Samuel Pearce, as expressive of his own feelings.

"It was never, till to-day, that I got any personal instruction from our Lord's telling Peter by *what death* he should glorify God. Oh, what a satisfying thought, that God appoints those means of dissolution, whereby he gets most glory to himself. It was the very thing I needed; for, of all the ways of dying, that which I most dreaded was by consumption, (in which it is now most probable my disorder will issue. But O, my dear Lord, *if* by *this death* I can most *glorify thee*, I prefer it to all others, and thank thee that by this means thou art hastening my fuller enjoyment of thee in a purer world."

During his sickness, he greatly enjoyed the society of his brethren in the ministry, and other christian friends; and was often heard to say that he never loved his friends so well before. Every little favor shown him seemed deeply to affect him and awaken emotions of gratitude. He would say, "O, how kind this is."

On the first day of January, 1843, which was the sabbath, he sent the following note to the Seminary church, with a request that it should be read at the communion.

"The Rev. Mr. Nettleton sends his very affectionate regards to the members of this church, requesting an interest in their prayers, that God would sanctify him wholly in spirit, in soul, and in body, and prepare him for the solemn hour of exchanging worlds, whenever it shall come."

The next morning I called to see him, and found him in an unusually happy frame of mind. After inquiring whether his note was received, he remarked with great animation, his eyes sparkling through the tears, that he loved the church more and more. He expressed a peculiar affection for the students of the Seminary, and an ardent desire that they might become faithful ministers of the gospel. He mentioned the great satisfaction which it had given him to hear of the prosperity and usefulness of those who had gone out from the Seminary. He then went on to expatiate on the importance of a high standard of ministerial character, on account of its great influence on the interests of the church. He deprecated particularly, in the ministers of Christ, every thing which savors of pride and self-sufficieney—every thing which looks like ostentation, or a desire to attract notice to themselves. He loved to see ministers humble, meek, unassuming, steadily devoted to their work, and more anxious to glorify God, and save the souls of men, than to acquire popularity.

He often remarked that a time of health was the time to prepare for death, and the time to give evidence of an interest in Christ. He said he had seen persons who, when in health, were very much devoted to the world; but who, when brought upon a sick bed, were very religious; agreeably to the representation in Jer. xxii. 20, 23. "*Go up to Lebanon and cry, and lift up thy voice in Bashan, and cry from the passages, for all thy lovers are destroyed.* I SPAKE UNTO THEE IN THY PROSPERITY, BUT THOU SAIDST, I WILL NOT HEAR. THIS HATH

BEEN THY MANNER FROM THY YOUTH, THAT THOU OBEYEDST NOT MY VOICE. *The wind shall eat up all thy pastures, and thy lovers shall go into captivity; surely then shall thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness. O, inhabitant of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the cedars,* HOW GRACIOUS SHALT THOU BE WHEN THY PANGS COME UPON THEE."

A short time before his death, when he was very ill, and when he thought it probable that he had but a short time to live, I said to him, you are in good hands. "Certainly," he replied. Are you willing to be there? "I am. I know not," said he, "that I have any advice to give my friends. My whole preaching expresses my views. If I could see the pilgrims, scattered abroad, who thought they experienced religion under my preaching, I should like to address them. I would tell them that the great truths of the gospel appear more precious than ever; and that they are the truths which now sustain my soul." He said, "you know I have never placed much dependence on the manner in which persons die." He spake of a farewell sermon which he preached in Virginia, from these words: *While ye have the light, walk in the light.* He told the people, that he wished to say some things to them, that he should not be able to say to them on a dying bed. And he would now say to all his friends, "While ye have the light, walk in the light." While making these remarks, there was a peculiar lustre on his countenance. I said to him, I trust you feel no solicitude respecting the issue of your present sickness. He replied with emphasis, "No, none at all. I am glad that it is not for me to say. It is sweet to trust in the Lord."

During the last twenty-four hours of his life, he said but little. In the evening of the day before his death, I informed him that we considered him near the close of life, and said to him, I hope you enjoy peace of mind. By the motion of his head, he gave me an affirmative answer. He continued to fail through the night, and at 8 o'clock in the morning, he calmly

fell asleep, as we trust, in the arms of his Saviour. May all his friends remember his dying counsel, "WHILE YE HAVE THE LIGHT, WALK IN THE LIGHT."

"Farewell, dear brother, may thy mantle rest
Upon the youthful prophets of our God.
Farewell.—Now rest, amid the blessed band,
With whom thou once didst worship here below,
And oft didst take sweet counsel. There are seals
Thy ministry attesting, and the crowns
Of thy rejoicing through eternal days.
There numbers beyond number of the sav'd
Together sing Redemption's endless song."

CHAPTER XV.

His general character.

INTELLECTUAL CHARACTER.

Dr. Nettleton possessed a clear, vigorous and discriminating mind—a mind adapted to investigation, and well disciplined by study. The course of his life, particularly in the first years of his ministry, was such as to prevent him from cultivating a very extensive acquaintance with books. But his mind was ever active, and constantly engaged in search of truth. Amid his abundant labors, he found some time for reading; and the books which he read, were well selected, and thoroughly studied. He made no pretensions to great scientific attainments, nor to any very extensive acquaintance with general literature; but his mind was well stored with biblical and theological knowledge. Few men ever possessed a more thorough acquaintance with the Bible, or were capable of expounding it in a more interesting manner. During his last protracted illness, it was a feast to sit by his bed-side and hear him open the scriptures. His expositions were so clear and natural, and were enlivened by such vivid and striking illustrations, and interspersed with such weighty practical remarks, as to render them not only exceedingly entertaining, but in a high degree edifying.

Dr. Nettleton was a profound divine; and in every species of theological discussion he was perfectly at home. With

the common objections and cavils against the doctrines of the gospel, he was very familiar; and for skill in stopping the mouths of gainsayers, and in speaking a word in season to persons of every description, he was highly distinguished.

A few anecdotes in illustration of this remark, will be here inserted.

Being accosted by a Universalist, who wished to engage in a discussion on the doctrine of future punishment, he said to him, "I will not enter into any dispute with you at present; but I should be pleased to have you state to me your views, that I may have them to think of." The man accordingly informed him, that in his opinion mankind received all their punishment in this life, and that all would be happy after death. Dr. Nettleton then asked him to explain certain passages of scripture, such as the account of a future judgment in the xxv. chapter of Matthew, and some others; merely suggesting difficulties for him to solve, without calling in question any of his positions. After taxing his ingenuity for some time in this way, and thus giving him opportunity to perceive the difficulty of reconciling his doctrine with the language of inspiration; he said to him, "you believe, I presume, the account given by Moses of the deluge, and of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah." "Certainly," he replied.

"It seems, then," said Dr. Nettleton, "that the world became exceeding corrupt, and God determined to destroy it by a deluge of water. He revealed his purpose to Noah, and directed him to prepare an ark in which he and his family might be saved. Noah believed God, and prepared the ark. Meanwhile he was a preacher of righteousness. He warned the wicked around him of their danger, and exhorted them to prepare to meet their God. But his warnings were disregarded. They doubtless flattered themselves that God was too good a being thus to destroy his creatures. But notwithstanding their unbelief, the flood came, and if your doctrine is true, swept them all up to heaven. And what became of Noah,

that faithful servant of God? He was tossed to and fro on the waters, and was doomed to trials and sufferings for three hundred and fifty years longer, in this evil world; whereas, if he had been wicked enough, he might have gone to heaven with the rest.

"And there were the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which had become so corrupt, that God determined to destroy them by a tempest of fire. He revealed his purpose to Lot, and directed him and his family to make their escape. 'And Lot went out and spake to his sons-in-law, saying, Up! get ye out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked to his sons-in-law.' They did not believe that any such doom was impending. They doubtless flattered themselves that God was too good a being to burn up his creatures. But no sooner had Lot made his escape, than it rained fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heaven, and they all, it seems, ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire; while pious Lot was left to wander in the mountains, and to suffer many grievous afflictions in this vale of tears; whereas, if he had been wicked enough, he might have gone to heaven with the rest." After making this statement, he requested the man to reflect on these things, and bade him an affectionate adieu.

A Restorationist once attacked him, and quoted these words of the Apostle Peter in support of his doctrine. "By which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison." Dr. Nettleton observed to him, that the time was specified in the next verse, when Christ preached to these spirits in prison. It was, "when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah. It was by his spirit which dwelt in Noah, that he preached to those who are now spirits in prison." "No," said the man, "that cannot be the meaning of the passage. The meaning is, that Christ, after his crucifixion, went down to hell and preached to the spirits in prison." "Be it so," said Dr. Nettleton, "what did he preach?" "I do not

know," he replied, "but I suppose he preached the gospel." "Do you think, said Dr. Nettleton that he preached to them any thing different from what he preached on earth?" "Certainly not," said he. "Well," said Dr. Nettleton, "when Christ was on the earth he told sinners, that if they should be cast into prison, they should not come out thence, till they had paid the uttermost farthing. If he went down to hell to preach to the lost spirits there, he doubtless told them, you must remain here, till you have suffered all that your sins deserve. What influence, then, would his preaching have towards releasing them from the place of torment?"

An Antinomian complained to him, that ministers dwelt so much, in their preaching, on the demands of the law. Believers," said he, "are not under law, but under grace." Is it not the duty of believers," said Dr. Nettleton, "to repent?" "Certainly," he replied. "Of what is it their duty to repent?" said Dr. Nettleton. The man saw at once the precipice before him. If he said, of sin, he perceived that the next question would be, what is sin but a transgression of the law? and if believers are not under obligations to obey the law, what can there be for them to repent of?

This is a specimen of the manner in which he often demolished, at a stroke, the errors of men, and caused the light of truth to flash instant conviction on their minds.

Falling in company with a violent opposer of religion, who professed to be a Universalist, and who also denied the inspiration of the scriptures, he said to him, "I will not dispute with you; but I presume I can tell you how you came to adopt your present sentiments. I suspect you have seen the time when the Spirit of God was striving with you—when you felt that you was a sinner, and that you must repent or perish. But your wicked heart resisted these convictions. You loved your sins, and was unwilling to renounce them. Your conscience told you that you must pray, or you would be lost; but your heart replied, I will not pray, nor will I be lost. Hence

you undertook to convince yourself that God will not punish the wicked. But I do not think you have yet quite silenced your conscience. You still have some forebodings of future misery. You are sometimes afraid, at least, that the Bible is true, and that there is a day of judgment, and a world of wo. But if you wish entirely to silence your conscience, you are in a fair way to do it. Continue to flatter yourself, and to resist the truth, and God will help you to succeed. Thus it is written, 'For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned, who received not the love of the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.'"

This address proved an arrow in the man's heart. He saw himself to be a lost sinner, and soon became a hopeful subject of renewing grace.

A caviler once said to him, "how came I by my wicked heart?" "That is a question," said he, "which does not so much concern you as another, viz: how you shall get rid of your wicked heart. You have a wicked heart, which renders you entirely unfit for the kingdom of God, and you must have a new heart, or you cannot be saved; and the question which now most deeply concerns you, is, how you shall obtain it." "But," said the man, "I wish you to tell me how I came by my wicked heart." "I shall not undertake to do that at present," said Dr. Nettleton; "for if I could do it to your entire satisfaction, it would not help you in the least towards obtaining a new heart. The great thing for which I am solicitous, is, that you should become a new creature and be prepared for heaven." As the man manifested no wish to hear any thing on that subject, but still pressed the question how he came by his wicked heart, Dr. Nettleton told him that his condition resembled that of a man who is drowning, while his friends are attempting to save his life. As he rises to the surface of the water, he exclaims, "how came I here?" "That question," says one of his friends, "does not concern you now.

Take hold of this rope." "But how came I here?" he exclaims again. "I shall not stop to answer that question now," says his friend. "Then I'll drown," replies the infatuated man, and spurning all proffered aid, sinks to the bottom.

A stupid, worldly man once said to him, "you know, Mr. Nettleton, that when we would do good, evil is present with us." "Yes," he replied, "and that is a bad case; but it is worse, when we would *not* do good, and evil is present with us."

A man once asked him, "how shall I get a disposition to pray?" "I wish to know, in the first place," he replied, "whether you are sincere in asking the question; for if you are not, it will be of no use for me to answer it, because you will not follow my directions." "I am sincere," said the man; "I really wish to know how I can get a disposition to pray." "It seems, then," said Dr. Nettleton, "that you have already got a disposition to get a disposition to pray. How did you get that. And why is it not just as easy to have a disposition to pray, as to have a disposition to get a disposition to pray!" In this way he showed the man that he deceived himself in supposing that he was sincere in asking the question.

A young female, who had been for some time in a state of religious anxiety, said to him, "what do you think of the doctrine of election? Some say it is true, and some say it is not true, and I do not know what to think of it." "And what do you wish to think of it?" said Dr. Nettleton. "I wish," said she, "to think that it is not true." "Suppose then," said Dr. Nettleton, "that it is not true. The doctrine of repentance is true. You must repent or perish. Now if the doctrine of election is not true, what reason have you to believe you ever shall repent?" After a moment's reflection, she replied, "if the doctrine of election is not true, I never shall repent." Her eyes were then opened upon her true condition. Every refuge failed her. She saw that she was entirely dependent on the sovereign grace of God; and there is reason to believe

she was soon brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light.

A certain individual said to him, "I cannot get along with the doctrine of election." "Then," said he, "get along without it. You are at liberty to get to heaven the easiest way you can. Whether the doctrine of election is true or not, it is true that you must repent and believe, and love God. Now what we tell you, is, that such is the wickedness of your heart, that you never will do these things, unless God has determined to renew your heart. If you do not believe that your heart is so wicked, make it manifest by complying with the terms of salvation. Why do you stand caviling with the doctrine of election? Suppose you should prove it to be false; what have you gained? You must repent and believe in Christ after all. Why do you not immediately comply with these terms of the gospel? When you have done this, without the aids of divine grace, it will be soon enough to oppose the doctrine of election. Until you shall have done this, we shall still believe that the doctrine of election lies at the foundation of all hope in your case."

A woman, who was known to be a great opposer of the doctrine of election, said to him one day, "you talked to me yesterday, as if you thought I could repent." "And can you not?" said he. "No, I cannot, unless God shall change my heart." "Do you really believe," said he, "that you cannot repent, unless God has determined to change your heart?" "I do," said she. "Why madam," said he, "you hold to the doctrine of election in a stricter sense than I do. I should prefer to say, not that *you cannot*, but that you *never will* repent, unless God has determined to change your heart."

To a young woman who had long been thoughtful, but not deeply impressed, and who seemed to continue from week to week in the same state of mind, he said one day, "there are some who never will become true believers. Christ said unto the Jews, 'ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep.'

Perhaps this is your case: and I tell you now, that if you are not one of Christ's sheep, you never will believe on him, and I hope it will ring in your ears." And it did ring in her ears. From that moment, she found no peace, till, as she hoped, her peace was made with God.

A young female, who had been for some time under distress of mind, said to him one day, "I know not what to do next." "Next!" he replied, "Next to what!" She instantly saw the worthlessness of all her prayers and strivings, and replied, "Next to nothing."

To a man, who manifested great opposition to the doctrine of election, he once said, "If I should go to heaven, I feel as if I should wish to say in the language of the apostle, 'who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which were given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began.' Now, if we should meet in heaven, and I should make use of this language, will you quarrel with me there?"

"Do you believe," said an Arminian to him one day, "that God influences the will?" "I do," he replied. "How do you prove it?" "I prove it by this passage of scripture. 'For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.'" "But that does not mean," said the Arminian, "that God influences the will, and now how do you prove it?" "I prove it," said Dr. Nettleton, "by this passage, 'For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.'" "But that, I say, does not mean that God influences the will." "And what does it mean?" said Dr. Nettleton. "It means," said the Arminian, "that God gives us a gracious power to will and to do." "Then it does not mean," said Dr. Nettleton, "that *God works in us to will and to do!*"

In one place, where he was laboring in an interesting revival of religion, there was a man of considerable influence, who was a member of the church; but whose principles and practice were a great reproach to religion. He opposed all

religious meetings, except on the Sabbath. At the same time, he made no objection to balls and parties of pleasure, but encouraged his children to attend them. Two of his daughters, one evening, without his knowledge, went to hear Dr. Nettleton preach. Finding that they had gone, he repaired to the place, and interrupted the meeting by ordering his daughters to return immediately home. Then addressing the preacher, he said, "Mr. Nettleton, will you call and see me to-morrow morning at 9 o'clock?" "I will, sir," he replied. Accordingly at the time proposed, he was at the house. "Mr. Nettleton," said the man, "I do not approve of night meetings." "Neither do I approve of balls," said Dr. Nettleton, "I think their influence upon young people is bad." "I do not approve of such meetings as yours," said he. "Oh!" said Dr. Nettleton, "it is to *religious* meetings that you object, when people meet together to worship God. If I understand you, you feel no opposition to meetings of young people for amusement, if they are held in the night, and continue all night. Did you ever take your children from the ball-room?" "The command," said he, "is six days shalt thou labor." "Did you ever quote that command," said Dr. Nettleton, "to prove that it is wrong to attend balls, and parties of pleasure?"

Then assuming a solemn and affectionate mode of address, he said to the man, "my dear sir, you are a member of the church, but you must not wonder if you are regarded by your acquaintance, as in heart, the enemy of religion, unless you pursue a more consistent course of conduct. While you uphold balls, and oppose meetings for religious worship, you will find it difficult to make any body believe that you have the least regard for the religion which you profess." This address brought tears into the man's eyes, and whatever may have been his feelings, there was after this, a decided change in his outward deportment. He suffered his children to attend religious meetings; nor do I know that he ever afterwards openly opposed them.

He once fell in company with two men who were disputing on the doctrine of the saints' perseverance. As he came into their presence, one of them said, "I believe this doctrine has been the means of filling hell with christians." "Sir," said Dr. Nettleton, "do you believe that God knows all things?" "Certainly I do," said he. "How, then, do you interpret this text? 'I never knew you,'" said Dr. Nettleton. After reflecting a moment, he replied, "the meaning must be, I never knew you as christians." "Is that the meaning?" said Dr. Nettleton. "Yes, it must be," he replied, "for certainly God knows all things." "Well," said Dr. Nettleton, "I presume you are right. Now this is what our Saviour will say to those, who at the last day, shall say to him, Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drunken in thy presence, &c. Now, when Saul, and Judas, and Hymeneus, and Philetus, and Demas, and all who, you suppose, have fallen from grace, shall say to Christ, Lord, Lord; he will say to them, I never knew you—I NEVER *knew you as christians.* Where then are the christians that are going to hell?"

Said an individual to him, "do you believe in the doctrine of the saints' perseverance?" "It is my opinion," he replied, "that that doctrine is taught in the Bible." "I should like then," said the individual, "to have you explain this passage, Ezek. xviii. 24. '*When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All the righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentionad; in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.*'"

Said Dr. Nettleton, "you have imposed upon me a hard task. That is a difficult text to explain; and what renders it the more difficult, is, that the commentators are not agreed as to its meaning. Some have supposed, that by a righteous man, in this passage, is meant a self-righteous man." "I do not believe that," said the individual. "Neither do I," said

Nettleton, "for in that case, it would seem to teach that if a self-righteous man should persevere in his self-righteousness, he would be saved. Some have supposed, that by a righteous man is meant one who is apparently righteous." "I do not believe that," said the individual. "Neither do I," said Dr Nettleton, "for in that case, the text would seem to teach that if a hypocrite should persevere in his hypocrisy, he would be saved. You suppose, do you not, that by a righteous man in this passage, is meant a true saint?" "Certainly, I do." "And you suppose that by a righteous man's turning away from his righteousness, is meant falling away, as David did, and as Peter did?" "Certainly." "And you believe that David and Peter are now in hell?" "No, by no means. David and Peter repented and were restored to the favor of God." "But," said Dr. Nettleton, "when the righteous turneth from his righteousness—in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, *in them shall he die*—IN THEM SHALL HE DIE. Now if David and Peter did turn from their righteousness in the sense of this passage, how can we possibly believe that they were saved?" The individual now found the laboring oar in his own hands; and after attempting for some time unsuccessfully to explain the difficulty in which he found his own doctrine involved, Dr. Nettleton said to him, "if there is any difficulty in explaining this text of scripture, I do not see but you are quite as much troubled with it as I am."

A man once said to him, "I sincerely desire to be a christian. I have often gone to the house of God, hoping that something which should be said, might be set home upon my mind by the spirit of God, and be blessed to my salvation." "You are willing, then, are you not," said Dr. Nettleton, "that I should converse with you, hoping that my conversation may be the means of your conversion?" "I am," he replied. "If you are willing to be a christian," said Dr. Nettleton, "you are willing to perform the duties of religion; for,

this is what is implied in being a christian. Are you willing to perform these duties?" "I do not know but I am." "You are the head of a family. One of the duties of religion is family prayer. Are you willing to pray in your family?" "I should be," he replied, "if I were a christian. But it canno be the duty of such a man as I am, to pray. The prayers o the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord." "And is i not," said Dr. Nettleton, "an abomination unto the Lord, to live without prayer? But just let me show you how you deceive yourself. You think you really desire to be converted. But you are not willing even to be convicted. Just as soon as I mention a duty which you are neglecting, you begin to excuse and justify yourself, on purpose to keep your sin out of sight. You are not willing to see that it is a heinous sin to live in the neglect of family prayer. How can you expect to be brought to repentance, until you are willing to see your sinfulness? And how can you flatter yourself that you really desire to be a christian, while you thus close your eyes against the truth?"

A young lady, who was under concern of mind, said to him, "I certainly do desire to be a christian. I desire to be holy. I would give all the world for an interest in Christ." He replied, "what you say, will not bear examination. If you really desire religion for what it is, there is nothing to hinder you from possessing it. I can make a representation which will show you your heart, if you are willing to see it." "I am," said she. "It will look very bad," said he, "but if you are willing to see it, I will make the representation. Suppose you were a young lady of fortune;—and suppose a certain young man should desire to obtain your fortune, and should for that reason, conclude to pay his addresses to you. But he does not happen to be pleased with your person. He does not love you, but hates you. And suppose he should come to you, and say, I really wish I could love you, but I do not.

I would give all the world if I could love you, but I cannot. What would you think of that young man?"

A person once said in his presence, that to inculcate upon sinners their dependence on God for a new heart, is suited to discourage effort, and to lead them to sit down in despair. He replied, "the very reverse of this is true. Suppose a number of men are locked up in a room, playing cards. Some person informs them that the roof of the building is on fire, and that they must make their escape, or they will perish in the flames. Says one of them, 'we need not be in haste, we shall have time to finish the game.' 'But,' says the person who gave the alarm, 'your door is locked.' 'No matter for that,' he replies; 'I have the key in my pocket, and can open it at any moment,' 'But I tell you, that key will not open the door.' 'Won't it?' he exclaims; and rising from the table, flies to the door, and exerts himself to the utmost to open it. So sinners, while they believe that there is no difficulty in securing their salvation at any moment, quiet their consciences, and silence their fears. But when they are taught that such is the wickedness of their hearts, that they never will repent, unless God interposes by his regenerating grace; they are alarmed, and begin to inquire, in deep distress, what they shall do to be saved."

A young man of liberal education, and of a clear and vigorous mind, having just read Edwards' Treatise on the Will, said to him, "the reasoning is conclusive. It is impossible to controvert it. It amounts to absolute demonstration." To which he assented. "Then," said the young man, "I am not a free agent, and am not accountable for my conduct." "That does not follow," said Dr. Nettleton. "I admit your premises, but I deny your conclusions; and moreover, you do not believe it yourself. If you did, you would not fear to blaspheme your Maker. But you dare not do it. You know you are a free and accountable agent."

To a young man, who professed to be an atheist, he said,

"you are not so sure as you pretend to be, that there is no God. You dare not go alone, and kneel down, and in a solemn manner offer a prayer. If there is no God, you will incur no danger by so doing; and yet you dare not do it. This shows that you are afraid that there is a God, who cannot be deceived, and who will not be mocked."

In conversing with opposers of religion, while he was very plain and faithful, he was never harsh in his manner; but always kind and affectionate, in obedience to the divine injunction, "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if peradventure, God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." And not a few of the open enemies of religion, were through his instrumentality hopefully converted to Christ.

CHARACTER AS A PREACHER.

The preaching of Dr. Nettleton was, for the most part, extemporaneous. He rarely had any manuscript before him, unless it were a very brief outline of his discourse. He was compelled to adopt this course, from the circumstances in which he was placed. Laboring almost constantly in revivals of religion, his time was so much occupied in attending religious meetings, and in conversing with individuals in private, that he found it impossible to write his sermons. After he had preached a short time, his mind was exceedingly tried on this subject; and he seriously deliberated on the question, whether it was not his duty to remit some of his other labors, that he might devote more of his time to study, and particularly to writing. But after having prayerfully considered the subject, and taken counsel of his brethren in the ministry, he came to the conclusion, that it was his duty to persevere in that course, which God was crowning with such signal success.

But notwithstanding these disadvantages, *he was an instructive preacher*. Although he preached principally without wri-

ting, he did not preach without study. He bestowed much thought on his sermons. They were rich in matter; and although they were so plain as to be easily understood by the most illiterate, they were interesting and instructive to persons of the most cultivated intellect. He investigated subjects thoroughly, and exhibited the result of his investigations with a clearness and force rarely, if ever, equaled. The remark of a plain man, after having listened to one of his discourses, will give some idea of the character of his preaching. "While he was speaking," said he, "a stream of light went right through me."

He was a doctrinal preacher.—It was his opinion that a belief of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, is the basis of all genuine religious experience. He was aware that there might be religious excitement, and much religious zeal, where these doctrines are discarded, and even opposed; but he had no confidence in such excitements. He had learned from his own observation and experience, that the preaching of these doctrines is suited to promote genuine revivals of religion; and that revivals, where they are not faithfully preached, are apt to run into the wildest fanaticism. He believed that faithful, judicious doctrinal preaching, is adapted to humble saints, and excite them to fervent prayer, and the diligent discharge of their various duties; and at the same time, to produce conviction in the consciences of sinners, to destroy their self-righteous hopes, and to bring them to the foot of the cross. He had no fears that the doctrines of grace, when clearly explained, and properly exhibited, would paralyze effort, and encourage sloth and spiritual apathy. He had abundant proof continually before his eyes, of a directly contrary effect. These doctrines, in his hands, were the sword of the spirit, and the power of God unto salvation.

But while he was pre-eminently a doctrinal preacher, he was at the same time,

A practical preacher.—He preached the doctrines practi-

cally. While he explained them and rescued them from the misrepresentations of cavilers and errorists, and enforced them by irresistible arguments, he never preached them as matters of mere speculation; but always, as truths of everlasting moment. He applied them to the hearts and consciences of his hearers, as subjects in which they had a personal and infinite interest. He set no value upon a mere speculative faith. He was aware that men may hold the truth in unrighteousness; and while he strenuously insisted on the great Protestant doctrine of justification by faith, he as strenuously insisted on the necessity of a living faith, which worketh by love, and purifieth the heart, and manifests itself in a life of holy obedience.

He was a wise preacher.—Wise in the selection of his topics, and in his mode of discussing them; but especially in adapting his discourses to the state and circumstances of his hearers. In this respect, he was particularly distinguished. When he commenced laboring in a place, he very soon ascertained the state of the people, and what kind of instruction was suited to their condition. If they had previously had an undue proportion of doctrinal preaching, and were beginning to pervert the doctrines by contemplating them in such a light as to furnish them with an excuse for the neglect of duty; he found it necessary to press upon the consciences of sinners their obligations, and to urge the duty of immediate repentance. Where the previous instruction had been of an opposite character, he found it necessary to dwell much on the doctrine of regeneration, and other kindred topics. This is what, in familiar language, he called "cross-ploughing;" and he uniformly found it to produce the desired effect. During the progress of a revival, he always seemed to know what was needed at every particular crisis, and all his discourses were admirably timed.

He was a plain preacher.—By this I mean, that he exhibited the truth with remarkable clearness, so that every body could

understand it; and with such force of reasoning, that it could not easily be resisted. Although he possessed a strong and discriminating mind, and was somewhat fond of metaphysical discussion; yet he rarely introduced abstract and metaphysical reasoning into the pulpit. His reasoning was of the rhetorical kind, which, often at a stroke, carried overpowering conviction to the mind. It was said by one who was well acquainted with his mode of illustrating and enforcing divine truth, "He is always unanswerable." And it was even so. What he undertook to establish, seemed to be settled beyond controversy. And it was done in so simple and easy a manner, as to cause the hearer to wonder that he had never seen it thus before.

He was a solemn preacher.—He carefully avoided in the pulpit, witticisms, ludicrous comparisons, and every thing suited to produce levity. He felt that he was standing in the presence of God, and addressing immortal beings on subjects of infinite moment. He had a higher object than to amuse his hearers, who were slumbering on the brink of eternal perdition. His heart yearned with compassion for them, and his object was to impress upon their minds a sense of their lost condition. The great realities of eternity were before his mind. He of course felt solemn. It was not affectation, but a reality. He had no sanctimonious tone. His manner was simple and unaffected. His articulation and emphasis were natural, and the deep bass tones of his voice were sometimes peculiarly solemn and impressive. Under his preaching, an awful solemnity usually pervaded the assembly. No one, unless it were some bold blasphemer, was disposed to trifle. Such were the manifest tokens of the presence of God, that the minds of the people were filled with awe, and the breathless silence was broken only by the occasional sighs and sobs of anxious souls.

He was a faithful preacher.—Few men ever had a more vivid sense of the responsibility connected with the sacred

office; or were enabled more successfully to resist the various temptations to unfaithfulness. He was, in an unusual degree, raised above the fear of man. He made it his object to please, not men, but God, who trieth our hearts; and no earthly consideration could induce him to keep back what he believed it to be his duty to preach. Still, he was never harsh and denunciatory; but always kind and affectionate. He never made it his object to give offence, but always to commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. His heart glowed with love to souls, and it was his great desire to be instrumental in their salvation. And for this purpose, he set before them with great plainness their sin and danger, and solemnly and affectionately warned them to flee from the wrath to come.

The following conclusion of a sermon on the divine law, may serve as a specimen of his faithfulness in applying divine truth to the consciences of his hearers.

"But what must be the state of every sinner out of Christ? Sinner, in what court will you plead? At the tribunal of justice, or of mercy? It is with the kindest intention that you are now called upon to hear, that the sentence of eternal death is pronounced upon you, and that this sentence is holy, just, and good. Let the miseries of this life—let the messenger of death, and the dark world of wo, rise up to your view and testify how awful is that law which condemns you. To vindicate the honor of this broken law, everlasting fire is prepared for the devil and his angels. Here they dwell in endless torments. These, O, sinner, were once angels of light, and dwelt in the presence of God. But how are they fallen, no more to rise! They sinned against that God, whose law now condemns you. 'The inhabitants of the old world, and of Sodom, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.'

"Out of Christ, you are condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on you. Out of Christ, all your actions hith-

erto, are scanned by this perfect law, and not one sin is pardoned. Out of Christ, you stand this moment in awful hazard of losing your immortal soul, and suffering for every failure of perfect obedience to this holy law. Out of Christ, nothing but the mere mercy of that God, in whose hand is your life—the mercy of Him, whom you are continually provoking by your sins, this moment holds you from dropping into the flames of hell. What then must be the weight of your guilt? If one sin must send an angel of light into the bottomless pit—if in consequence of Adam's sin, he too, with all his posterity, might have been reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, without one offer of pardoning mercy; what must be your guilt, when every action is laid in the balance, and found wanting? Oh, that you might hear, and tremble! When God in awful majesty pronounced this law from Mount Sinai, his voice then shook the earth, and they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more, for the guilty world could not endure that 'which was commanded. But this law still speaks, however deaf, and however careless the sinner may be—this law still speaks, and proclaims approaching vengeance near.

"But stop. The uplifted arm of vengeance is yet stayed. The collected wrath yet waits a moment. A voice from the mercy-seat—a warning voice is heard. The Saviour calls. Haste then, O sinner, haste to Christ, the only refuge from the storm, and covert from the gathering tempest. Then safe from the fear of evil, at a distance, you shall only hear the thunders roll; while pardon, peace, and eternal life are yours."*

He was an animated preacher.—This would naturally be inferred from the foregoing extract. He felt deeply the truths

* The following fact has been communicated to the biographer, since the the publication of the first edition of this work. The sermon from which the above extract is taken, was preached by Dr. Nettleton, in Edinburgh, while on his visit to Scotland. It made a very powerful impression on the congregation.

which he uttered, and aimed to impress them strongly on the minds of his hearers. He was not boisterous or vehement; but there was an earnestness in his manner, which produced the conviction in all who heard him, that what he said came from the heart. He spake as a dying man to dying men. He felt that he stood on the verge of eternity, and that he was addressing immortal beings, to whom he must be a savor, either of life unto life, or of death unto death. This characteristic of his preaching is well described by Dr. Shepard, in the extract given from his letter in a former chapter.

He was an eloquent preacher.—His, however, was not the eloquence which dazzles by splendid diction, and graceful delivery; and which fills the hearers with admiration of the brilliant talents of the preacher. It was the eloquence of thought and feeling—eloquence which made the hearers forget the preacher, in the all-absorbing interest which they felt in the subject of his discourse. "If we were compelled," say the Edinburgh Reviewers, "to give a brief definition of eloquence, we should say, it was practical reasoning, animated by strong emotion." It would be difficult to give a better description of Dr. Nettleton's preaching, than that contained in this definition.

His sermons, being mostly extemporaneous, were not, of course, characterized by elegance of style. But they exhibited a clearness, and force, and vivacity, which are seldom found in the written discourses of the most celebrated preachers. He was, it is true, generally diffuse, and sometimes repetitious. He would frequently dwell upon a thought, and present it in different aspects, for the purpose of impressing it more deeply

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While he was speaking, a pious woman who sat in a remote part of the house, was so affected that, leaving her seat and walking up in front of the pulpit, she thus addressed the preacher. "Dear Sir, don't forget, that 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life.'"

on the mind, and fixing it in the memory.* But he was never tedious He kept the attention of the audience riveted to the subject. Every eye was fastened upon him, and the whole assembly listened in breathless silence.

His elocution, though not the most graceful, was natural and forcible. His voice was clear, and melodious, and under complete command. His enunciation was distinct, and his emphasis, as I have already remarked, was natural, and sometimes remarkably impressive. He was rather moderate and slow in the commencement of his discourse; but as he advanced, he increased in fervor, till he reached, sometimes, the highest pitch of eloquence. Not a few educated men, of extensive acquaintance, and good taste, have pronounced his preaching the best specimen of genuine eloquence which they ever witnessed. If power to arrest and chain the attention of large auditories for hours together, and to stir up the fountains of deep feeling in the soul, is proof of eloquence, then surely Dr. Nettleton was eloquent.

He was a successful preacher.—Soon after he began to preach, his labors were crowned with signal success, and for ten or eleven years he was almost constantly employed in guiding inquiring souls to Christ. Few men have ever been instrumental in the conversion of so many souls. Thousands have acknowledged him as their spiritual father, who will, I doubt not, be his joy and crown in the day of the Lord.

SOCIAL CHARACTER.

Dr. Nettleton was never married. We cannot, of course, contemplate him in the conjugal and parental relations. He did not choose a life of celibacy, on account of disappoint-

* It was a remark of one who had often heard him preach, "He had the art of repeating some short and striking sentence in a manner, and with an effect, which no man could successfully imitate. It was like the repeated strokes of the beetle, in the hand of a giant, upon the head of the wedge, driving it to the very heart of the knotty oak."

ment, as some have supposed, or because he had not a soul formed for friendship; but having devoted himself to a missionary life, soon after his conversion, he supposed it would be necessary for him to remain single. Both he and Mills entertained the opinion, that it would be inexpedient, if not impracticable, to take wives with them on a foreign mission; and they entered into an agreement on their first acquaintance, to hold themselves free from all matrimonial engagements. Afterwards, the course of life pursued by Dr. Nettleton, was such as to render it inconvenient, to say the least, to enter into the family state.

But as I have said, he had a soul formed for friendship. He possessed a mild and amiable disposition, and rendered himself exceedingly agreeable in the society of his friends. No one could be long in his company without discovering the kindness of his heart. He never put on a morose, austere, or sanctimonious air. He was uniformly cheerful; but never suffered his cheerfulness to degenerate into levity. His conversational powers were good, and were agreeably and usefully employed. He was very successful in his attempts to interest young persons, and to secure their confidence and esteem. He would address them with such kindness and tenderness, and make his conversation so entertaining, as well as instructive, that it could not fail to win their affection, and cause them to take pleasure in his society. He was very much in the habit of introducing poetry to enliven conversation, and give it a useful direction. In a circle of young persons, he would often read some striking passage from Cowper, or Milton, or Pollok, or Carlos Wilcox; and after commenting on the beauties of the poetry, he would in a natural and easy way, lead their minds to the contemplation of some important truth suggested by the passage. Many a youth has in this way had his attention first arrested to the great concerns of eternity.

HIS DISCRETION.

Dr. Nettleton was preëminently a wise man. This, I presume, no one will deny, who is intimately acquainted with his history. In the whole course of his life, in matters of a public or private nature, he exhibited an uncommon degree of discretion. He took comprehensive views of things, and was able beyond most men to discern their relations and tendencies, and to trace actions into their ultimate results. Hence he was able to see, at all times, what was required by the circumstances in which he was placed. He knew how to adapt means to ends, and so judicious was he in the selection of his means, that he seldom failed of accomplishing the ends which he had in view. He engaged in no visionary projects. He was not deficient in zeal; but his was not the blind zeal which leads to rash and headlong measures; but it was a zeal which is according to knowledge. A distinguished clergyman who had been intimately acquainted with his history for several years, and who had noticed with admiration the skill with which he formed and executed his plans for doing good, exclaimed, "he is the wisest man I ever knew."

Good is sometimes done at great expense. The indiscretions of good men not unfrequently so mar their works of benevolence, as to render it doubtful whether more good is done than evil. As one remarks, "There are men in the sacred office, so constitutionally *indiscreet*, that in whatever they undertake, they will choose the wrong way, if there is one. There always have been individuals rushing into the office, who are lamentably deficient, both in native and acquired powers, for the discharge of its duties. An illiterate man, if he have good sense, and true humility, may do good in revivals; but if he is proud, and rash, and censorious, as well as ignorant, he will probably do much more hurt than good; especially by revolting the sensibilities of intelligent men, who

think that religion should promote sobriety, decorum, and an amiable temper in its subjects." *

Many of the religious excitements which have occurred in our country within the last twenty years, although they have doubtless been the means of the salvation of some souls; have through injudicious management, resulted in incalculable evil. Desolation has followed in their track. Churches have been rent asunder. Pastors have been driven from their flocks. Souls, in great numbers, there is reason to fear, have been deluded with false and hypocritical hopes. Sinners have been hardened in impenitence. Not a few have been confirmed in infidelity; and the very name of a revival has become a hissing and a by-word. But it was not so under the labors of Dr. Nettleton. The good accomplished by his labors had no such drawbacks. The revivals, under his preaching, as we have seen, were remarkably pure. Those who were admitted to the churches, for the most part, adorned their profession. In those revivals, churches were built up, beautified, and strengthened. Pastors were more firmly seated in the affections of their flocks; and a benign influence was shed upon the surrounding community.

When we consider the great evils which have been connected with the labors of many modern evangelists, and contrast them with the immense, and almost unmingled good accomplished by his labors, we are forcibly struck with the wisdom of the man.

Dr. Nettleton was a wise counsellor. Many of his brethren have felt and acknowledged their obligations to him for salutary advice in difficult and trying circumstances; and have ascribed their own usefulness, in no small degree, to the aid derived from his counsels. And while he was himself an eminent example of discretion, he considered this a prime qualification in a minister of Christ. When the Rev. Dr. Cor-

* Dr. Porter's Letters on Revivals.

nelius was Secretary of the American Education Society, he submitted to Dr. Nettleton a list of qualifications to be possessed by those who should be encouraged to enter the ministry. It read thus. "1. Piety. 2. Talents. 3. Scholarship. 4. Discretion," "Change the order," said he. "Put discretion next to piety."

The following is an extract of a letter written to a theological student in 1826. "It is very important to a young preacher that he avoid a censorious spirit, and that he always speak kindly to those who are held in reputation among christians. If he labor among such, he had better forego the prospect of doing *present* good, than to lose the confidence of these men. I can think of times in the early part of my ministry, when I had no doubt that a given course would be blessed to the conversion of many souls. I might have been mistaken. At any rate, acquiescence in the judgment of my brethren would secure their confidence—and I have been astonished to find them so generally willing to allow me to adopt my own course. The truth is, all christians are imperfect; and all our exertions to do good, are attended with more or less imperfection. Good measures will be often *innocently opposed*, for the want of experience only. The same measures may be very good, or very bad in different places, and under different circumstances. The question has often been proposed in the public prints, 'What is the best mode of dealing with anxious souls?' Much may be said and written to profit; but after all, we might as well ask and answer the question, 'What is the best method of treating all manner of sicknesses and all manner of diseases among the people?' We may talk about the best means of doing good; but after all, the greatest difficulty lies in doing it with a proper spirit. *Speaking the truth in love. In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves. With the meekness and gentleness of Christ.* I have known anxious sinners drop the subject of religion in consequence of a preacher addressing them in an angry tone.

Mankind, it is true, will be sure to find fault with every thing that awakens their fears; but we should endeavor so to conduct, as to keep their consciences on our side in spite of all their opposition. Take care and not give them just cause to complain."

In a letter to the same individual, written in 1827, speaking of the measures introduced in the western revivals, he says, "It is said that God has blessed these measures to the conversion of sinners. The same may be said of female preaching; and it may be asked in reference to that, 'How can that be wrong which God has blessed to the conversion of a soul?' I answer, it is an acknowledged fact, that profane swearing, opposition to revivals, mock conferences have all been overruled to the conviction and conversion of sinners. And shall we not encourage and defend these things? The man who defends the principle in question appears bad in argument and worse in practice.

"There is, no doubt, a kind of prudence which has ruined thousands forever. But the preacher who condemns *prudence* in toto, will soon be forsaken by her inmate. Prov. viii. 12. He may drive at the understandings and consciences of his hearers with all his might, but there is a point of prudence beyond which he cannot pass without losing his entire hold on both. Zeal without prudence will defeat its own end. Zeal untempered with love and compassion for souls, will soon degenerate into harshness and cruelty of manner and expression, which will have no other effect on an audience than ranting and scolding, and even profane swearing. The result in morals will be, what the children of this world denominate 'penny-wise,' and 'pound-foolish.' It is like cutting off the heads of hundreds, to save the life of one man."

HIS DISINTERESTEDNESS.

It has already been remarked, that during the ten years in which he was laboring almost constantly in revivals, he

received as compensation, barely sufficient to defray his expenses. But he manifested no solicitude on that subject. At a meeting of ministers on one occasion, when he was present an allusion was made by some one to the scanty support which he received—he replied, by simply repeating the following passage of Scripture, Luke xxii. 35—"When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, nothing."

The Rev. Dr. Chapin, in a letter from which an extract has been made in a former chapter, says, "View him, likewise, in relation to money. It is certainly difficult, probably impossible, to find an active person more entirely free from an avaricious craving after worldly property, than brother Nettleton was while with us, and must indeed have previously been. Rather, he manifested the most generous feelings. On finding a serious person, though indigent, destitute of a Bible, or psalm-book, or hymn-book, he would find means of supplying the deficiency. He seemed not even to think of accumulating property. It is believed that while among us, he did not volunteer to mention such a subject. When questioned touching his property, as he was once, or perhaps, twice—his answer was brief, that he was worth little or nothing. The inquiry was immediately dropped. Not a particle of solicitude or care on such a subject was manifested." * * * "In due time the book (his hymn-book) was published. Here again, may be seen his pious indifference to worldly wealth. Though he continued indigent, and though he knew not whether the work would be acceptable and find a demand in the market; yet, supposing it possible that the book might be worth somethimg beyond the cost of publication, he made a donation of all the profits of the first edition to the A. B. C. F. M." The hymn-book had an extensive sale, and became the source of a large income. "But," adds Dr. Chapin, "who ever saw brother Nettleton elated by this unexpected result. On the contrary, his disregard of

worldly accumulation appears to have been in proportion to his worldly success. His donations were now, like his income, enlarged. With his habitual generosity, he remembered those whom he pleasantly called *his poets*. Those, too, were not forgotten, whom he accounted assistants in the preparation of his book. While in Europe, he made another handsome donation to the A. B. C. F. M.*

"Be it now added, as the crowning proof of brother Nettleton's comparative indifference for money, that he gave a noble portion of the income derived from his book, to a Theological Institution. Beyond question, this finishing act of his refined benevolence, enlarged, and expansive in the ratio of his augmented means, emanated from the same disinterested love of souls, and Christ, and salvation by grace, which moved him to study and labor so untiringly for the promotion of pure revivals."

RELIGIOUS CHARACTER.

That Dr. Nettleton was a man of more than ordinary piety, will be evident to all who have attentively perused the foregoing account of his life. His piety was deep, steady, operative, and consistent. "It was not a flame that dazzled for a moment, and then flickered and died away." Nor was it subject to those alternations of feeling, which are sometimes witnessed in emimently good men. Some seem to be always in the possession of great spiritual enjoyment, or in the horrors of thick darkness. Dr. Nettleton's feelings were more uniform. He seems never to have been greatly elated, nor deeply depressed; but to have maintained generally a calm and peaceful frame of mind.

"His piety was consistent. There was a beautiful symmetry in his christian character. The various graces of the Spirit were harmoniously blended, and exhibited, each in its

* $500.

proper place, and in its due proportion. It is the nature of false religion to be deformed; and characteristic of all hypocrites, that they strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. But the christian character of Dr. Nettleton was formed on principles which enter into all the minutiæ of a man's life. He was not a stickler for some things, while negligent of others equally important. He did not expend all his zeal in opposing certain sins, and manifest no opposition to others equally heinous. He did not contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and neglect the practical duties of religion. He inculcated alike the doctrines and duties of christianity, and bore testimony against all those sins by which God is dishonored, and the souls of men are endangered.

He was a man of *fixed religious principle, and great decision of character.* By this, is meant, not that he was self-willed, and bigoted; but that he conscientiously and steadily adhered to what he believed to be right. His opinions were not formed hastily, nor taken up upon credit, but were the result of deliberate and prayerful examination; and when formed, they were rarely changed. He acted, not from passion, or any sudden impulse of the moment, but from principle; and could not be induced to swerve from the path of duty, either by flattery, or frowns, or any worldly motive. When entreated by one in whom he had reposed great confidence, and whose friendship he highly prized, to give up his opposition to certain doctrines, which he believed to be erroneous, and of dangerous tendency, he replied, "You might as well ask me to cut off my conscience and throw it away." He was not influenced by the principles and practices of others, any farther than he was satisfied that they were conformed to the word of God. He thought for himself, and formed his purposes in the fear of God, and with reference to the final judgment. As was said of another, "It was not enough for him, that others believed, and allowed, and practiced;—h[illegible] was not content till he saw the reason, and his hands, as it were, handled the evidence

This, with his love of truth, his reverence of the divine authority, and his sense of obligation, guarded him against rash conclusions, and led him cheerfully to renounce whatever he found to be erroneous, and to adopt what he found to be in accordance with the law and the testimony."

HUMILITY—was a striking trait in the character of Dr. Nettleton. When a young man, he read in an old book this maxim: "Do all the good you can in the world, *and make as little noise about it as possible*," This maxim had great influence in the formation of his character. He treasured it up in his memory, and believing it to be in accordance with the precepts of the gospel, he made it a rule of conduct. Hence every thing like ostentation, he abhorred. Few men ever had greater temptations to the indulgence of pride. His great popularity as a preacher, and the almost unparalleled success which attended his labors, even while he was but a youth, constituted a source of great danger. Many of his fathers and brethren in the ministry trembled for him, lest he should be lifted up with pride. But he seems to have been remarkably delivered from the power of this temptation. Notwithstanding his great popularity, he seems not to have been elated. He was modest and unassuming, and always sensible that the success which attended his labors, was not owing to any goodness in himself, but to the sovereign grace of God.

He was well acquainted with the deceitfulness and wickedness of the human heart. He knew, of course, how to form a just estimate of his own character. He knew that in the sight of God he was vile, and like Job, he abhorred himself. He was also sensible of his entire dependence on God, for any measure of faithfulness which he might have exhibited in his service, and for all the success which had attended his labors. This truth he endeavored to keep constantly before his mind—when speaking of the revivals, which occurred

under his preaching, he was careful to take no credit to himself, but to give the glory to God, to whom all glory is due. He was aware of his danger; and with much prayer and watchfulness guarded against it. When once asked, what he considered the best safeguard against spiritual pride, he replied, "I know of nothing better than to keep my eye on my great sinfulness."

Dr. Shepard, of Lenox, says, "He would not suffer any one to commend his sermons, or any of his public performances, or to speak of the success of his labors, if he could prevent it; and when any one attempted to praise him in view of the good he had done, it seemed directly to fill his heart with grief."

Mr. Cobb, of Taunton, also says, "He was remarkably free from the love of applause. When any one spoke to him of the good he was doing, he would sometimes reply, 'we have no time to talk about that.' And frequently I have known him to turn pale and retire from the company, and prostrate himself before God, as a great and unworthy sinner."

Dr. Nettleton was never forward to speak of his own religious experience. To his intimate friends, he would sometimes open his heart freely. But he was not in the habit of referring to himself in his preaching, nor in his ordinary conversation. And it was always painful to him to see others disposed on all occasions to talk about themselves. Such a practice seemed to him to be adapted to fan the flame of spiritual pride, and to excite and cherish the prejudices of the ungodly, rather than to recommend religion to the world.

LOVE TO THE SOULS OF MEN—was another striking trait in the character of Dr. Nettleton. It has been remarked that "the mind sometimes receives a bias in conversion, or the period of first love, which gives a particular direction to the whole course of future life." It may have been so in this case. In the period of his espousals to Christ, the worth of the soul and the affecting condition of all unrenewed men, were pow-

erfully impressed upon his mind, and awakened most intense desires for their salvation. He used to say to himself, "If I might be the means of the salvation of one soul, I should prefer it to all the riches and honors of this world." It was this which prompted him to seek the christian ministry, and to persevere amid so many discouragements in his efforts to obtain a liberal education. It was this which kindled in his heart such zeal in the cause of his master, and stimulated him to such arduous and unremitted labors. And when through loss of health, he was compelled to desist in a great measure from active labor, it was still his heart's desire and prayer to God for sinners, that they might be saved. He could still say with the Psalmist, "If I forget thee, O, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." It was the deep interest which he felt in the cause of Zion and the salvation of souls, which filled him with such concern in view of the prevalence of those errors in doctrine and practice, which he felt it his duty to oppose. It was his solemn conviction, that these things were introducing a spurious religion, and destroying the souls of men, which led him to take a stand against them. The following passage in the life of Brainerd exactly expressed the feelings which he often manifested.

"These things I saw with great clearness, when I was thought to be dying, and God gave me great concern for his church and interest in the world at this time. Not so much because the late remarkable influence upon the minds of the people was abated, and almost wholly gone, as because the false religion, the heats of imagination, and wild and selfish commotions of the animal affections which attended the work of grace, had prevailed so far. This was what my mind dwelt upon day and night; and this to me was the darkest appearance respecting religion in the land. For it was this chiefly that had prejudiced the world against inward religion. This

I saw was the greatest misery of all, that so few saw any manner of difference between those exercises which are spiritual and holy, and THOSE WHICH HAVE SELF-LOVE FOR THEIR BEGINNING, CENTRE, AND END."*

The deep interest which Dr. Nettleton felt in the cause of Zion, and the salvation of souls, is strikingly manifest in his letter to Dr. Beecher, written in 1822, and inserted in a former chapter. He says,

"I hear frequently from many places where God has, of late, poured out his spirit and revived his work. My friends residing in these places, far and near, either visit me, or write to me, and tell me all their joys and sorrows. For a number of years, I have kept a list of the names of those who have hopefully experienced religion, and made a public profession of it, in these revivals. When far from them, in my retired moments, I have often read over their names, and pondered on them, and on the scenes they have awakened, with emotions too big for utterance. I have watched them with anxious solicitude, and have made particular inquiry about the spiritual welfare of each one, as opportunity presented. My heart has often been refreshed when some Timothy has *brought me good tidings of the faith and charity of these young converts.* No tidings have been more *refreshing.* I have often had occasion to adopt the language of Paul on this very subject; "*What thanks can we render to God again for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before God.*" Some few indeed have dishonored their profession, have opened afresh the wounds of the Saviour, and caused the hearts of his friends to bleed. Bunyan says, 'If at any time I heard of such instances of apostacy among those that have been hopefully benefited by my ministry, I feel worse than if I had followed one of my natural children to the grave.' I have lost near and dear relatives, but the things of which Bunyan speaks, have

* Brainerd's Life. p. 498.

sometimes struck me with a deeper sadness." Who can read this, and doubt that the writer felt a deep interest in the welfare of Zion and the salvation of souls?

MEEKNESS—was another trait in the character of Dr. Nettleton. The success of his labors greatly exasperated the enemies of religion, and awakened in their breasts the most malignant hostility. False reports, intended to destroy his character, were invented and industriously circulated; and in other ways, he frequently met with personal abuse. But the malice of his enemies awakened only his pity. So far as I have been able to learn, he was never known to manifest the least resentment towards those who slandered and abused him. When reviled, he reviled not again. When he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously. He felt himself laid under special obligations to pray for his persecutors; and to the honor of divine grace, let it be recorded, not a few of them were hopefully brought to repentance, and became some of his most ardent friends.

He never allowed himself to talk about the ill treatment which he received from his enemies, lest it should awaken wrong feelings in his heart. He was in the habit of inculcating upon young converts a spirit of meekness: and for this purpose, he often brought before their minds the words of the Apostle, 1 Pet. ii. 20, 21, "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well and suffer for it ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God; for even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps." He also frequently referred to this passage. Prov. xxiv. 17, 18, "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth, lest the Lord see it, and it displease him." He evidently possessed in an uncommon degree, that charity which suffereth long and is kind, which envieth not, which vaunteth not itself and is not puffed up, which doth not behave itself

unseemly, which seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

AN UNWAVERING ATTACHMENT TO THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE—was a striking trait in the character of Dr. Nettleton. He not only embraced these doctrines in all their fullness, and practical application, but "he may be said to have kept the faith with undeviating constancy." Like the thousands who were converted on the day of Pentecost, he *continued steadfast in the Apostles' doctrine.* He was not carried about by divers and strange doctrines, but his heart was established with grace. His belief in the great doctrines of the cross was so interwoven with his religious experience, and so identified with all his hopes of future happiness, that his faith never wavered.

He died in the full and firm belief of the doctrines which he maintained and defended while he lived.

But he was not a perfect man. He had his failings. He was ready to acknowledge that he was a miserable sinner, and that his proper place was at the foot of the cross. But his faults were better known to himself and his God, than to his fellow-men.

It is true, he did not escape reproach. His great success as a minister of Christ, brought upon him the maledictions of infidels and scoffers, and stimulated them to the most unremitted efforts to destroy his character; and many a time might he have said, "If it had not been the Lord who was on my side when men rose up against me, then they had swallowed me up quick, when their wrath was kindled against me." But he trusted in God, and through his merciful interposition, he escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler.*

* When Dr. Nettleton was in Virginia, in 1828, a man from Connecticut, who was residing there, put in circulation some slanderous reports, which induced the Rev. Dr. John H. Rice to write to several distinguished individuals at the North, for the purpose of ascertaining how Dr. Nettleton's character was re

On account of his opposition to certain doctrines and certain measures, he was severely censured by some of his brethren in the ministry, and other professed followers of Christ. Whether justly or unjustly, the reader will judge, after attentively considering what has been said in the preceding chapters. One thing is certain; the things for which

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garded by those who had been well acquainted with his history. In reply to his letters, many testimonials were forwarded, among which were the following:

"YALE COLLEGE, Aug. 23, 1826.

"*Rev. and Dear Sir:*

"I have most cheerfully obtained the testimonials which you have requested in your letter of the 9th. Perhaps this is all which the occasion requires. The injurious reports to which you refer, I do not recollect to have heard of before. I am now told that they were some years since put in circulation here, examined into, and found to be groundless. That they were mere fabrications appears evident from this, that up to the present time, Mr. Nettleton's christian character stands as fair as ever in the estimation of the people of Connecticut, to whom he has been so intimately known. Most affectionately yours,

"JEREMIAH DAY.

"Rev. John H. Rice, D. D."

"The Rev. Asahel Nettleton has been long and extensively known and acknowledged in this State, as a faithful and devoted minister of Christ; as a man of exemplary piety, of rare self-denial, and of uncommon power and success, in his labors as an evangelist. Though occasionally assailed by calumny, his christian character is above suspicion, in the view of the ministers and churches in this State, to whom he is intimately known, and who have cause for abundant gratitude that the blessing of heaven has descended in copious measures upon his public ministrations.

JEREMIAH DAY, President of Yale College;
LEONARD BACON, Pastor of the First Church in New Haven;
NATHANIEL W. TAYLOR, Prof. of Didactic Theology;
CHAUNCEY A. GOODRICH, Prof. of Rhetoric;
ELEAZER T. FITCH, Prof. of Divinity;
SAMUEL MERWIN, Pastor of the United Society in the City of New Haven."

"BOSTON, Aug. 22, 1828.

"*Dear Brother:*

"It is, I should think, about ten years since those stories, imported into Virginia, by Mr. O. W., have been dead and buried in Connecticut, having served the generation of infidels and scoffers, and all haters of evangelical doctrine and of revivals, as long as they were able.

"Never, for a moment, were they believed by the ministers and churches of

he was censured, were things in which he conscientiously believed he was doing his duty—things to which he was prompted by a supreme regard to the glory of God, and the interests of Zion. It is to be hoped, therefore, that those who believe him to have erred, will do justice to his motives.

Connecticut, nor did they do him the least injury, only as they were sent after him, or sent *for* to the places where his preaching was blessed; nor even then only till the friends of religion had opportunity to obtain correct information on the subject. It would be difficult for a Virginian to conceive the virulence with which some persons in New England oppose revivals of religion, without understanding that in many places where the truth has been preached too faithfully to be endured in a state of disobedience, there is often a club of infidels or nothingarians, whose enmity is always made rampant by a revival of religion, and whose ridicule and misrepresentation are sure to be propagated by the irreligious and immoral. Such, in my opinion, is the origin of all the stories against brother Nettleton in Connecticut. His friends debated the question once, whether it might not be his duty to sue, not doubting that he possessed the entire power of bringing his accusers to punishment. But the conclusion was, with the religious and respectable part of the community, they do him no harm, and it will be better for the cause of religion that he hold his peace, and *live them down*. This he has done; and it is out of the power of such men as W. and R. S. H. to injure Mr. Nettleton in Connecticut. H., I suppose I know, W. I do not. But I know that in S. there was probably a larger club of infidels, or persons reputed such, than in almost any town in the State. * * * * The alleged dissatisfaction with Mr. Nettleton at New Haven is, in my opinion, utterly false. I have been often in that city, and am more familiarly acquainted there than in any other place in Connecticut, it being the place of my nativity, and of my fathers' sepulchres. I do know that Mr. Nettleton possesses eminently the affection and confidence of the ministers and churches, and most respectable laymen in the city.

"As further evidence of the perfect impotency of all such rumors against Mr. Nettleton in Connecticut, I would state that about six years ago, on the failure of my health, I left my church and congregation in the care of Mr. Nettleton, under whose preaching, before my return, a revival of religion commenced, during which he secured eminently the confidence and affection of my people, which to this day remains undiminished. In short, there is not a minister in New England whose character for piety and purity stands higher than does that of Mr. Nettleton.

"You will receive further communications in due time, for you may rest assured that we possess the means, and shall not fail to use them, of putting down such impudent falsehoods, and of vindicating the well-earned reputation of Mr Nettleton. Affectionately yours,

"Lyman Beecher."

In Conclusion, it may be said of him as was said of another, "By the grace of God, he was what he was," and to the honor of grace, and not for the glory of a sinful worm, be it recorded. Like all other men, he was depraved. He felt it, and lamented it, and longed to be free from sin, but certainly taking him altogether, we have seldom seen a character whose excellencies were so many and so uniform, and whose imperfections were so few. We have seen men rise high in contemplation, who have abounded but little in action. We have seen zeal mingled with bitterness, and candor degenerate into indifference;—experimental religion mixed with a large

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To this letter is appended the following, from the Rev. Dr. Taylor:

"*Dear Brother:*

"Dr. Beecher has sent this to me unsealed, and I take the liberty to add a word. What he has said is as it should be—exactly my views of the matter. I should only object to further means of putting down these 'impudent falsehoods.' I think I know brother Nettleton too well to suppose he would wish it. If such testimonials as this of Dr. Beecher and others are not sufficient to give brother Nettleton a character in Virginia, in defiance of the obloquy of his enemies and his Master's, he had better come back to Connecticut. The ministers and churches would be glad to receive him, and highly appreciate his labors These slanders are simply the 'homage vice pays to virtue.' 'Wo unto you, when all men shall speak well of you.' Brother Nettleton is safe from this denunciation. I am affectionately yours,

"N. W. Taylor."

"New Haven, Sept. 17, 1828.

"We, the undersigned, having been for many years acquainted with the character of the Rev. Asahel Nettleton, do hereby certify that we consider him as a man of unblemished purity of life; that we believe this to be the estimation in which he is universally held in this town, and in this State; and that no fact has ever come to our knowledge, which ought to impair the confidence of the public in his character as a christian and a man.

David Daggett,	Benjamin Silliman,
Simeon Baldwin,	J. Knight,
Noah Webster,	Eli Ives,
Elizur Goodrich,	J. L. Kingsley.

Similar testimonials were forwarded by other distinguished gentlemen, both in New England and New York; particularly by the Hon. John Cotton Smith, of Connecticut; and by the Rev. Drs. Spring, Mc Auley, and Proudfit, and by the Hon. Jonas Platt, of New York.

portion of enthusiasm, and what is called rational religion, void of every thing that interests the heart of man. We have seen splendid talents tarnished with insufferable pride, seriousness with melancholy, cheerfulness with levity, and great attainments in religion with uncharitable censoriousness towards men of low degree; but we have not seen these things in [Nettleton.]

"There have been but few men in whom have been united a greater proportion of the contemplative and active; holy zeal and genuine candor; spirituality and rationality; talents that attracted almost universal applause, and the most unaffected modesty; faithfulness in bearing testimony against evil, with the tenderest compassion to the soul of the evil doer; fortitude that would encounter any difficulty in the way of duty, without any thing boisterous, noisy, or overbearing; deep seriousness with habitual cheerfulness; and a constant aim to promote the highest degrees of piety in himself and others, with a readiness to hope the best of the lowest, not breaking the bruised reed, nor quenching the smoking flax."*

Since the foregoing was written, the following letters have been received. The first is from the Rev. Dr. Tenney, late pastor of the church in Wethersfield, Conn.; and the other from the Rev. Dr. Humphrey, late President of Amherst College. They were both intimately acquainted with Dr. Nettleton; and I am happy to find such a coincidence of views between them and myself, in regard to the character of this distinguished servant of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Tenney says, "My particular acquaintance with Dr. Nettleton commenced in 1818, while he was laboring in a revival in Rocky Hill, a parish in Wethersfield. My acquaintance became intimate during nearly three months of his labors with me in a great revival, in the winter of 1820–21. I have felt that he was a *remarkable man*—fitted to draw forth the often

* Fuller's Memoir of Pearce.

repeated saying of a venerable President of a distinguished College, respecting him—'*a wonderfully wise man!*' He was distinguished for a ready, clear, correct, and far-reaching perception, or discernment. Almost as by intuition, he discerned individual characters, and seemed to see the precise truth fitted to reprove, or benefit them. At once, he seemed to learn the state of a church and people; and to see doctrines and errors, and all their bearings and tendencies, and to bring them instantly to what he regarded as the supreme test, the word of God. In the scriptures, he was mighty. He had evidently studied the word of God much, and deeply, and seemed to perceive the exact purport and design of a verse, a paragraph, or larger portion, and to see its precise application and force. He entered so much into the very meaning and spirit of the word of God, that on almost any passage he would so naturally and strikingly present the meaning, as to appear singularly original. Conversing at one time in my study, with a number who had for a considerable period indulged hope, but who were disposed to hesitate and delay in professing religion, he turned to Luke viii. 45, 48, and briefly stated, that the diseased woman *feared and trembled* (after she had been healed by touching Christ in the crowd,) when she perceived that Christ would bring her and the miracle to public view. And well she might tremble, said he, for she had been *stealing* a cure, and meant to conceal herself in the multitude; and now she expected reproof from Christ; but when she confessed the whole, *before all the people*, he said to her, 'Daughter, be of good cheer, thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace.' He then guarded the converts against concealing among the multitude, what Christ had done for them, or fearing his rebuke, if they confessed him before all the people.

"To a man of education, and of a very proud spirit, who under some seriousness of mind, had a private interview with Dr. Nettleton, who said at its close, 'Mr. Nettleton, I will thank you not to speak of my case to any one, for it is doubt-

ful yet what the result will be,' he at once replied, 'I agree with you perfectly, that it is best your case should not be known; and I engage to keep it entirely to myself, and if you will do the same, it will not be known. It is as you say, very doubtful how the case will turn. You may soon give up the subject, and lose your soul.' Under this remark, the man was soon so deeply distressed that he cared not if the whole world knew it; and very soon he found peace.

"When a person once asked me with a supercilious air, 'Do you, according to the Assembly's Catechism, believe that God has foreordained whatsover comes to pass?' Dr. Nettleton, coming up at that moment, said to him in reply, 'Mr. P—— do *you* believe that *God* worketh *all things after the counsel of his own will?*' Perpetually did his ready and clear discernment of men and things exhibit itself. This gave him power in conversation, in the room for inquiry, and in the pulpit. Clear minds always present truth in a clear, simple, and convincing style. He did so eminently. The word of God, in his hands, was indeed a sharp two edged sword that pierced, and was a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. His preaching was emphatically 'in demonstration of the spirit and with power.' There was not the least attempt at display. He was always hidden behind his subject, and he would present that so clearly, and naturally, and justly, and strikingly, that his hearers were filled with the light of truth, rather than admiration of the man. He addressed the reason and consciences of men in a way not to excite their animal passions, or any outbreak of feeling; but to reach, and search, and move the deepest sensibilities of their souls. This did, under him, as it does in every case, secure the utmost stillness, the most fixed, and almost breathless attention, and the most profound solemnity. His was the eloquence of thought, of truth, of living, burning truth from the living God. In such eloquence I have never known him surpassed—seldom equaled. The Spirit of God was in it. His preaching seemed in perfect

harmony with the word of God, and with the influences of the Spirit upon the minds of men.

"In revivals of religion, he appeared to be peculiarly at home. He had evidently been, in his own conviction and conversion, very thoroughly taught of God, and had also made the work of the Spirit a subject of deep study. If he laid stress on what some regarded as little things, it was because he clearly saw the important bearings of little, as well as great things. Some of his movements in going from one place to another, sometimes appeared strange, because others saw not, and he was not wont to expose, all the reasons which governed his conduct. It was his constant aim to keep a church humble, sensible of their dependence, and prayerful. He seemed perfectly to understand the circumstances, and agents opposed to revivals, and how to counteract them. He preached the great evangelical doctrines which exalt God and abase man. He preached the sovereignty of God, in all its extent and bearings, and equally the infinite obligations of man. He had the most wonderful talent of waking up the conscience, and bringing it in to the utmost activity. He drove sinners with masterly skill from one excuse and refuge after another, till he drove them, through the aids of the Spirit, to total despair, except in the mercy of God through a Redeemer. He preached and labored in revivals in so wise a manner, as to render religion and revivals real and *respectable*, in the view of intelligent men, and many of the best cultivated minds, and in the highest walks of life, were drawn over to the cross, instead of being driven off by low, or extravagant measures to a returnless distance from their own denomination and religion. He had no sympathy with 'anxious seats'—with the plan of calling upon thoughtful sinners in an assembly to bow their heads, and follow him in a form of consecrating themselves to God—nor of urging anxious sinners to speak and pray in a meeting for inquiry—nor of urging converts at once to exhort and pray, or tell their experience in public meetings. He

never raised among converts a company of exhorters and lay preachers, much more ready, whenever they could get an opportunity, to speak than to hear, to exhort than to receive instruction, to edify others by their own prayers, than to be edified by the prayers of older and more experienced christians. Converts under his labors were humble and teachable, and felt that, at most, they were babes in Christ, and needed the sincere milk of the word. Their disposition was the very opposite of self-confidence, arrogance, and denunciation of others less engaged than themselves. Still they were ready to every good work in their proper sphere, and with all becoming meekness and humility. He led them to hold prayer meetings among themselves, and they became united together in bands of love that could not be easily broken.

"The converts, with very few exceptions, were eminently intelligent and sound; and proved by their subsequent lives that they possessed the power as well as the form of godliness. The revivals in which he labored were emphatically pure, genuine revivals of true religion, as much so as any I have ever known. The churches were greatly humbled, refreshed and strengthened by them. The addition of converts to them, was an addition, with *very few* exceptions, not merely of numbers, but of light, strength, life, and influence. Congregations were increased by those who became, if not pious, constant attendants on public worship. Parishes were greatly strengthened, and pastors were more firmly established in the affection and confidence of their people. This was the invariable result where he labored in connection with a pastor. Invariably, pastors found themselves greatly improved and benefited by intercourse with him, and by his labors. Dr. Nettleton was very careful never to get into the pastor's place, but to keep him prominently before the people, as their regular spiritual guide. He delighted to strengthen the hands of the regular shepherd, and frowned on the slightest insinuation against him.

"On the whole, revivals under his preaching were blessings to the churches, to the parishes, to the pastors, and to multitudes of souls who were born into the kingdom of Christ; and most devout gratitude is due to the Great Head of the church for raising up a man so remarkable for doing great good and no hurt, in such delightful, as well as perilous times.

"Most truly yours,

"C. J. TENNEY."

Dr. Humphrey says, "It having pleased God to call our beloved brother Nettleton home to his everlasting rest, I rejoice to learn that you have consented to prepare a memoir of his eminently useful and devoted life, and that the volume is ready for the press.

"As it was one of the highest privileges of my life, to enjoy his acquaintance and friendship for more than thirty years, and as you have been pleased to ask me for my impressions of the man, of the characteristics of his preaching, of his manner of laboring in revivals, and of their permanent influence upon the churches and congregations where he labored, I do not feel at liberty altogether to decline. When such a man as Dr. Nettleton dies, who can refrain from 'magnifying the grace of God that was in him?' I only regret my inability to do it worthily, under the most favorable circumstances; and that my pressing engagements will not allow me time for any thing more than a hasty outline.

"Not having seen a word of your memoir, I cannot tell how far your judgment and my own may coincide, and I am glad of it. What you want, are *my* impressions and not those of yourself, or any other man; and you shall have them unborrowed and unmodified.

"In my estimation, Dr. Nettleton was a great man—not great, merely as he was good, but great, in the common meaning of the term. He was not a *learned* man. His Master never gave him time to distinguish himself as a scholar. He

had too much work for him to do in his vineyard, to allow it. Though he had a good substantial public education, Dr. Nettleton made no pretentions to high attainments in classical literature, or in any of the abstruse sciences. In the latter, he might have excelled, had not his soul been fired with higher and holier aims.

"In his theology, Dr. Nettleton was neither a 'high nor a low' Calvinist. While he admired the illustrious Genevan Reformer, and subscribed, ex animo, to all the leading doctrines of his immortal institutes, he called neither Calvin, nor any other man master. He was an Edwardean, rather than a high Calvinist; and yet profound as his veneration was for that 'greatest of theologians,' as Dr. Chalmers styles President Edwards, he thought it his duty to investigate every subject for himself. With his little duodecimo Bible, or his Greek Testament always in his hands, he was one of the most independent thinkers that I have ever known. He was, I might almost say, the last man to be captivated with visionary theories, or fanciful analogies and interpretations. Upon the 'foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone,' he stood like a pillar upon the everlasting rock. Nothing could shake him. Whether he ever drew out his system on paper, I do not know; but if he did, it will be found eminently scriptural, lucid and symmetrical—nothing more and nothing less, than sound, well digested and well guarded New England orthodoxy.

"As a preacher, Dr. Nettleton had many superiors, in what commonly goes under the name of pulpit eloquence. There was nothing particularly captivating in his voice, in his style, or his delivery—nothing to make you admire the man, or his writing, or his speaking; or in any way to divert your attention from the truths which he uttered. His prayers were generally short, and always fervent, scriptural and appropriate.

When he rose to speak, there was a benignant solemnity in

his countenance, which awed the most thoughtless into seriousness, while at the same time it exerted an unwonted desire to hear what he had to say. He had a voice of more than ordinary compass and power; and though there was nothing harsh or repulsive in its modulations, you sometimes regretted that he had not enjoyed better early advantages for training it. He always commenced on a low key, enunciating every word and syllable so distinctly, however, as to be heard without difficulty, in the remotest parts of the house. So simple were his sentences, so plain and unadorned was his style, and so calm was his delivery, that for a few moments, you might have thought him dull and sometimes even common place, but for the glance of his piercing eye, and an undefinable something in his whole manner, which insensibly gained and riveted your attention. As he advanced, and his heart grew warm, and his conceptions vivid, his voice caught the inspiration; his lips seemed to be 'touched with a live coal from off the altar;' his face shone; every muscle and feature spoke; his tones were deep and awfully solemn; his gestures, though he never flourished off a prettiness in his life, were natural, and at times exceedingly forcible. But his eye, after all, was the master power in his delivery. Full and clear and sharp, its glances, in the most animated parts of his discourses were quick and penetrating, beyond almost any thing I recollect ever to have witnessed. He seemed to look every hearer in the face, or rather to look into his soul, almost at one and the same moment. You felt that you was in the hands of a master, and never stopped to inquire whether he was a good or a bad pulpil orator. Whatever the critics might say, in one thing you could not be mistaken. He arrested your attention, and made you feel, for the time at least, that religion is indeed 'the one thing needful.'

Dr. Nettleton's delivery was always solemn, always earnest, and not seldom even vehement. This was particularly the case in the height of those numerous and powerful revi-

vals in the midst of which he labored for so many years. The action of his mind was intense. The yearnings of his soul over the impenitent were irrepressible. His countenance, his voice, every thing showed it. And yet, incredible as it may seem, in his most impassioned appeals, there was not a particle of enthusiasm. By this I mean, that he was never hurried away into any extravagance of language, or emotion. He never, for one moment, lost the balance of his mind. He was always perfectly self-possessed. I have seen him in circumstances of overpowering interest, when the movements of the Spirit were 'like a mighty rushing wind,' and could never perceive any wavering in his judgment or his prudence. He was ever the same in the pulpit, in the lecture-room, and in the inquiry meeting—always earnest and solemn, but never carried away by his feelings, beyond the bounds of propriety.

"Dr. Nettleton's sermons were plain, solid, evangelical, instructive and directly to the purpose. He always knew what he aimed at, and he seldom, if ever, missed his mark. Dodging was of no avail. His style was perfectly unadorned. Tropes and metaphors he never sought for; and I am not aware that they ever obtruded themselves upon his imagination. What he aimed at was to present the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, to his hearers, in the plainest and most forcible language he could command.

"The great power of his preaching consisted in its perspicuity, its directness, its fearless exhibition of the most unwelcomed truths of the Bible, and its earnest, solemn, and often terrific appeals to the conscience. No preacher that I ever heard, could make the law thunder louder in the sinner's ear. The sword of the spirit was his only weapon; and he wielded it with extraordinary dexterity and effect. Few ministers, I believe, have ever studied the windings of the natural heart, with more diligence and success, than he did. Hence, those masterly analyses, which used so often to star-

tle his hearers, as if all their thoughts had been suddenly laid open to the public gaze. In reviewing the history of Dr. Nettleton's life and labors, it is as clear to me that God raised him up to spend his best days in promoting revivals of religion, as that he raised up Whitefield for the same service on a wider theatre. They were as unlike in many respects, as any two great revival preachers could be, but they had 'one Lord and one faith'—the same love for souls, and the same irrepressible desire to win as many of them as possible, to Christ. Each was fitted for the age in which he lived, and for the work to which he was called—Whitefield to blow the trumpet over the dead and buried formalism of the churches, both in Great Britain and America; Nettleton, to 'strengthen the things that remained and were ready to die' in destitute churches of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and Virginia; and to help the brethren in gathering their spiritual harvests.

"Having no pastoral charge to confine him, and no family to provide for, and living, I may say for years, in the midst of these 'mighty works,' he was under better advantages for observing all the 'diversities of operations by the Spirit,' which are disclosed in 'times of refreshing,' than any of his immediate predecessors, or early contemporaries; and his Master had endowed him with the requisite gifts, both intellectual and moral, to make the most of these advantages. Shrewd, (pardon the epithet, as no other would so exactly express it,) observing, cautious, discriminating, and at the same time, 'fervent in spirit,' and mightily 'constrained by the love of Christ,' he was most happily guarded against feverish impulses on the one hand, and antinomian presumption on the other. Enjoying, as he did, for so many years, the best possible opportunity for studying the theory of revivals, his benevolent, inquisitive and ardent mind would not allow him to rest satisfied, without putting it to the most rigid test of scripture, experience and observation. Herein he

was in the truest sense a christian philosopher, and his philosophy was strictly Baconian. It consisted in observing phenomena and recording facts. I have long thought, and it is still my deliberate conviction, that he understood the whole subject of revivals, better than any man with whom I ever conversed or labored. He had studied it more profoundly. Indeed no man could well be a more perfect master of his business or profession. Neither Cæsar nor Napoleon ever studied the art of war with greater assiduity, than he did the heavenly art of winning souls to Christ. This may seem extravagant—I presume it will to some readers; but why should it? Had he not far higher motives for bending all the energies of his mind to learn how to save men, than they could have had for learning how to destroy them?

"But you wish me to say something of his *manner* of laboring in revivals, and of their *general character* under his preaching and management. This I am the more ready to do, from having had the best opportunities to observe and judge in one of them, which I have often since heard him speak of as among the most powerful he ever witnessed. He was with me three months, day and night, during which I saw and heard every thing. I was anxious to learn all I could from one whose labors had been so eminently owned and blessed by the Divine Head of the church, and not being, if I may say it, of an enthusiastical temperament myself, I think I was enabled to form a pretty correct judgment of his preaching, of his daily intercourse with sinners in every stage of awakening and conversion, and of the effect of those measures which he had been testing in scores of other revivals.

"It has been said, that in such seasons, we ought to look to God continually in fervent believing prayer, just as if he was the sole agent in carrying on the work, and at the same time, to labor with all our might, just as if we had it all to do ourselves. This was Dr. Nettleton's view of the matter, and

no man, perhaps, ever more fully carried it out in practice than he did. In his creed, the whole process of awakening, conviction and regeneration, was by the sovereign and special agency of the Holy Spirit. For this he prayed, and exhorted others to pray without ceasing, while at the same time, he labored with as much assiduity for the conversion of sinners, as if his Master had devolved the whole responsibility upon him. His theory was, that while 'the excellency of the power is all of God,' he works by means, no less in the moral than in the natural world. This led him to study the economy of grace in revivals, with the deepest interest; and as the result of it, to adopt the measures and use the means which seemed to him best adapted to the end.

"I do not say that his manner of conducting revivals, was in all respects the best that could have been adopted; much less that it would be best for every minister; but I have yet to learn, that a better and safer system of measures has been devised. Taken as a whole, it commends itself, to my judgment and observation, as eminently wise and guarded and scriptural. It was characterized by a deep and profound knowledge of human nature, as I think might easily be shown, did my limits permit. Let those who come after, improve upon it, or devise a better if they can. While I am far from believing that nothing remains to be learned in the heavenly art of winning souls to Christ, quite sure I am, that few if any of those professed revivalists who have succeeded Dr. Nettleton, and made the most noise in the churches, are the men to 'show us a more excellent way.' They have done what they could with strong lungs, startling appeals, new measures, and sweeping denunciations, and the blighting effects are truly mournful. In some wide districts which they have overrun, it is to be feared the churches will not recover from the desolating irruption for half a century. Most unwarrantable is the appeal which they sometimes make to Dr. Nettleton, as their fore-runner and exemplar. Nothing gave him so much

concern, during the latter years of his life, as the manner in which revivals were corrupted and brought into discredit and run down, by noisy, rash and impetuous evangelists. It grieved him to the heart, that so many churches in the land were ready to countenance them, and he earnestly protested against their errors and extravagances, to the day of his death. Though he would not deny, that there might be some real conversions in the great excitements which attended their preaching, it was his solemn and painful conviction, that multitudes were deceived with false hopes, who, under different instruction and measures, might have been brought to a saving knowledge of the truth.

"In his own management in times of revivals, by preaching and personal intercourse, nothing was more deserving of being studied and imitated, than his *thoroughness, caution and discrimination*. In these respects, there was a heaven-wide difference between Dr. Nettleton and some of the most noted of his professed imitators. Being thoroughly 'rooted and grounded in the truth' himself, his presentations of it were clear, pungent and searching. His revival topics were systematically and admirably arranged. In his discourses he began at the beginning. A full believer in the total depravity of the human heart, he arraigned sinners, whether young or old, as rebels against God, and made the threatenings of the law thunder in their ears, as but few preachers have power to do. With him, acting as an ambassador of Christ, there was no such thing as compromise. The rebels must 'throw down their arms,' and submit unconditionally, or he would give them no hope of pardon. Hundreds, if not thousands, can witness, what a terrible dissecter he was of the 'joints and the marrow.' At the same time that he showed the impenitent they were lost, he made them feel that they had 'destroyed themselves.' It was difficult to say which he made plainest, their danger or their guilt; their immediate duty to repent, or the certainty that without being drawn and renewed by the Spirit

of God, they never *would* repent. It was in vain for them to retreat from one refuge to another. He was sure to strip them of all their vain excuses, and deliver them over to their consciences, to be dealt with according to law and justice. He preached what are called the hard doctrines, such as divine sovereignty, election, and regeneration, with great plainness, discrimination and power. His grand aim was to instruct, convince and persuade; to this end, his appeals were constantly made to the understanding, the conscience and the heart. The passions he never addressed, nor were his discourses at all calculated to excite them. Any outbreak of mere animal feeling, he was always afraid of, as tending to warp the judgment, and beget false hopes. His grand aim was to instruct his hearers as thoroughly, and point out the difference between true and spurious conversion so clearly, as to make it difficult for them to get hopes at all, without good spiritual evidence on which to found them. Knowing how apt persons are to cling to their hopes, whether good or bad, he depended much more upon holding them back, till they had good evidence, than upon shaking them from their false foundations.

"As might have been expected under such a course of instruction, the great majority of those who came out and professed religion, so far as I have had opportunity to observe, have 'worn well.' They have proved intelligent, stable and consistent christians. The revivals under Dr. Nettleton's preaching, always strengthened the churches, and strengthened the pastors where they had them. I do not believe that an instance to the contrary can be adduced from the whole wide field of his labors, nor that a single church can be pointed out, which does not to this day feel their blessed influence. How different from the sad experience of hundreds of churches, congregations, and ministers, under the sway of bold, and reckless, and disorganizing revivalists. How many once united and flourishing churches, have been divided or broken

up, and how many worthy pastors have been undermined and driven away by them. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' 'The fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is.' Brought to these tests, all the great revivals under Dr. Nettleton's labors, will stand on the records of the church, in striking contrast, as so many bright evidences of his wisdom, fidelity, and eminent usefulness.

"Thus, my dear brother, have I complied with your request, as fully as time and limits would allow. I might have said much more, and should have been glad to have put down many striking facts and incidents, which fell under my own observation in the revival at Pittsfield, as illustrative of Dr. Nettleton's eminent qualifications for the great work to which his Master called him. But the foregoing hasty and very imperfect outline must suffice. 'His record is on high,' and his 'name will be had in everlasting remembrance.' I have no doubt, that amid the glories of the millenial day, and the brighter glories of heaven, he will stand conspicuous on the catalogue of those, who, 'having turned many to righteousness, will shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever.'

"I am very sincerely and affectionately
Yours, H. HUMPHREY.

"Amherst College, August 5, 1844."

The following letter from a distinguished layman, has been received since the publication of the first edition of this work.

"AUGUSTA, Me., Jan. 1, 1845.

"Respected Sir,

"While employing the evening of life in reading such of the various publications of this enlightened age as come within my reach, your *Memoir of Dr. Nettleton* has been put into my hands, which has so absorbed my attention, that I could not dismiss it until I had reached the last page. Surely the character of this excellent man deserves a place in our religious

annals; and I am happy to find it so ably and minutely executed and laid before the public for the benefit of future generations. Here is abundant proof that the uncorrupted doctrines of Calvin, drawn from the scriptures of truth, are the weapons which the Holy Spirit chooses to employ in the conviction and conversion of sinners; and a complete practical refutation of all attempts to change or modify those doctrines, in order to render them palatable to the views of the carnal mind. And it must be a source of high satisfaction to you, sir, to witness in the ministerial career of Dr. Nettleton, such ample proof that the doctrines you have contended for, have been so conspicuously owned and acknowledged by the Holy Spirit. And we have the attestation of an inspired Apostle, that the weapons of the gospel ministry 'are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.'

"The character of this sainted hero may be further illustrated by a quotation from Pollok, one of his favorite authors, with which I conclude.

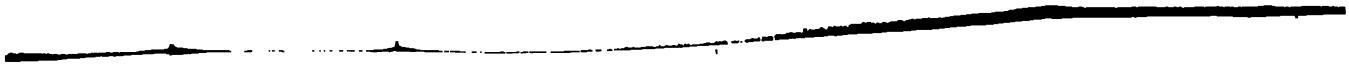
'High in the temple of the living God
He stood amidst the people, and declared
Aloud the truth, the whole revealed truth,
Ready to seal it with his blood. Divine
Resemblance most complete; with mercy now
And love, his face illumed, shone gloriously:
And frowning now indignantly, it seemed
As if offended Justice, from his eye,
Streamed forth vindictive wrath! Man heard,
Th' uncircumcised infidel believed;
Light-thoughted mirth grew serious and wept;
The laugh profane sunk in a sigh of deep
Repentance; the blasphemer, kneeling, prayed,
And prostrate in the dust, for mercy called.
Such was his calling, his commission such.
Yet he was humble, kind, forgiving, meek,
Easy to be entreated, gracious, mild;
And with all patience and affection, taught,

Rebuked, persuaded, solaced, counseled, warned,
In fervent style and manner.
A skillful workman he
In God's great moral vineyard, what to prune
With cautious hand he knew, what to uproot;
What were mere weeds, and what celestial plants
Which had immortal vigor in them, knew;
Nor knew alone, but watched them night and day,
And reared and nourished them, till fit to be
Transplanted to the paradise above.
Oh, who can speak his praise! great humble man!
He in the current of destruction stood,
And warned the sinner of his wo; led on
Immanuel's soldiers in the evil day,
And with the everlasting arms embraced
Himself around, stood in the dreadful front
Of battle high, and warred victoriously
With death and hell. And *now is come his rest,*
His triumph day.' [Course of Time pp. 200, 201

"With respect and esteem, I am, dear Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"H. SEWALL.



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